



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF 76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 183.

NEW YORK, JULY 1, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS AND MAJOR ANDRE; OR, TRAPPING THE BRITISH MESSENGER.

By HARRY MOORE



"See!" said Paulding, holding up a paper for Dick to look at; "this is a drawing of West Point. This man is a British spy!" "You are right," said Dick; "you have made an important capture."

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The Liberty Boys and Major Andre

OR,

Trapping the British Messenger.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

QUEER LETTERS.

"When did you get this letter, Major Andre?"

"This afternoon, sir."

"Who gave it to you?"

"A shrewd-faced boy of about twelve years, sir."

"You do not know who the boy was?"

"No, sir."

"That is bad; I wish you knew who he was and where to find him."

"So do I."

"If we could lay our hands on him we might be able to learn something that would throw some light on the writer of this letter."

"So we might."

"This is a very peculiar letter, Major Andre."

"You are right, General Clinton."

"Yes, it is peculiar, very peculiar."

"What do you make of it, sir?"

General Clinton shook his head.

"I hardly know what to make of it," he replied, slowly and thoughtfully; "it may be written in good faith and may mean much, and then again it may be a hoax, intended simply as a joke."

It was the last week in August of the year 1780.

Seated in the commander-in-chief's private room at headquarters in New York City were General Clinton and Major Andre, British officers, the former being the commander-in-chief of the British armies in America.

General Clinton was seated at his desk at one side of the room, Major Andre was seated near on a chair. In General Clinton's hand was a letter.

The letter in question purported to pertain to a commercial deal of some kind, which the writer was supposed to wish to make, but underneath the surface was a hint that it was from some officer high in the confidence of the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, and that a stronghold was to be given into the hands of the British. The letter was signed "Gustavus."

The two men looked at each other, thoughtfully for a few moments and then General Clinton looked at the letter again and shook his head slowly.

"I hardly know what to make of it," he said.

"Don't you think it may have been written in good faith?" asked Major Andre.

The general nodded thoughtfully.

"It is possible," he admitted.

"Then it will be a good plan to follow the affair up, don't you think?"

"Yes, it will be a good plan to do so; at any rate it can do no harm."

"True, sir."

"I would advise, therefore, that this letter be answered and that it be placed in the hands of the boy when he appears to-morrow evening, as the writer requests you to do."

"Very well, sir; I will answer the letter and then submit it for your approval."

"Do so; there may be some changes that I would like made."

"Very well."

"And, major, when the boy comes for the letter I want that you shall detain him. Bring him here; I wish to question him."

"I will do so, sir."

Major Andre then took his departure from headquarters and went to his own room, which was in a building not far distant.

He sat down, got out quill, ink and paper, and began to write.

It was slow work, for the letter had to be written very carefully. It must be disguised so that should it fall into the hands of someone it was not intended for its real meaning could not be learned.

This was difficult, indeed, but Major Andre was a bright young fellow and was equal to the task.

The major was young, handsome, intelligent and brave, and he stood high in the regard and confidence of General Clinton.

When at last he had completed the letter he returned to headquarters and laid it before the general.

Clinton read what his young friend had written and nodded his head approvingly.

"That is well done, indeed," he said; "it is better than I could have done myself. It is couched in such language as will lead the other correspondent to open up more and explain what he is driving at."

"I am glad that you are pleased, sir."

"The letter is all right as it is," said General Clinton; "seal it and have it ready for the messenger to-morrow evening, and be sure and bring the boy here."

"I will do so, if I have to carry him," was the reply.

On the following afternoon Major Andre put in an appearance at headquarters, accompanied by a shrewd-faced boy of about twelve years of age.

"What is your name?" General Clinton asked.

"Ben Banks."

"Where do you live?"

"Over by de river."

"In the city, eh?"

"Yes, mister."

"Who gave you the letter you brought to the major, there, yesterday afternoon?"

The boy shook his head.

"I dunno who he wuz, mister."

"Where were you when he gave you the letter?"

"I wuz settin' on the bank uv the river fishin'."

"The Hudson river?"

"Yes."

"And where did the man come from?"

"He come down the river in er boat."

"Ah! What kind of looking man was he?"

"Oh, he wuz jes' er common-lookin' man, erbout ez old ez ye air, mister," nodding toward Andre.

"What kind of clothes did he wear? Were they blue?"

The boy shook his head.

"No, they wuzn't blue; jes' common brown-colored cloes, mister."

"Whereabouts on the shore were you?"

The boy told them.

"And are you to meet him there this afternoon?"

"Yes, mister."

"Do you intend to go straight there?"

"Yes."

"All right, Ben. Now I will tell you what we are going to do: We want to see what the man looks like, and the major here is going to accompany you. He will hide near the spot, and you are not to let the man know that he is there."

"All right, mister; thet hain't nothin' ter me. I wuz ter bring ther letter an' he wuz ter give me two shillin's."

"Very good. Give him the letter, major."

Major Andre did so, and the boy placed it in his pocket.

"Come," said the young officer.

"Come straight back here, Major Andre," said the general, as they were leaving the room.

"Yes, your excellency."

The two left the headquarters building and walked along the street.

Many curious glances were cast after the well-dressed, handsome young officer and the ragged street urchin. Doubtless the people wondered why the two were together.

On they walked, and at last they arrived at the river.

Turning to the right, the boy led the way along the shore nearly a mile, and then he paused in a clump of trees and said:

"Right down there is whur the man will come in the boat."

He pointed to the sandy shore as he spoke.

"Very well; we will wait here till we see the boat coming, and then you will go down there and meet him while I will remain concealed here."

"All right, mister; but whut ye goin' ter do ter 'im?"

"Nothing; I simply wish to see him, that is all. I am curious to know what kind of looking fellow he is."

Half an hour passed and then a boat was seen coming down the river. It was half a mile away and was near the shore.

In the boat was one man.

"Is that the man?" asked Major Andre.

"I think et is, mister."

Closer and closer came the boat, and then the boy said:

"Yes, thet's him."

"Very well; go down to the shore; but mind you, don't say a word about me being here."

"I won't."

The boy walked out from among the trees and down to the edge of the water.

A few minutes later the boat was at the spot where the boy stood, and the occupant leaped ashore.

He was a fairly good-looking man of perhaps twenty-four years, and he greeted the boy pleasantly.

"Did you deliver the letter I gave you?" he asked.

"Yes, mister," was the reply.

"Good. And have you an answer to it?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me."

The boy drew the letter from his pocket and handed it

to the man, who glanced at it and then placed it in his own pocket, at the same time glancing furtively around and up and down the river.

No one was in sight, and he drew a breath of relief.

"You have done well, my boy," he said.

"I'm glad uv et; don' furgit the two shillin's, mister."

The boy had a good business head on him. He was not going to let the man get away without paying him.

The man at once drew a couple of silver pieces from his pocket and handed them to the boy.

"There they are," he said.

"Thank ye, mister."

"That's all right; now let me suggest something, my boy. It is that you come here nearly every day, or every day if you can do so, at about this hour. There may be more of this work for you to do."

"All right; I'll be here, but I'll expeck pay fur doin' uv et, mister."

"Certainly; you shall have two shillings for every letter you carry."

"All right."

Then the man leaped into the boat, seized the oars and rowed away.

Major Andre had observed the man closely, and now he said to himself:

"He's a peasant from up the country somewhere. He is not the writer of the letter."

"Ye heerd whut he said about me bein' heer ev'ry day?" the boy asked when he had rejoined the officer.

"Yes, Bob."

"Whut erbout et? D'ye want me ter do et?"

"Yes, and be sure to bring the letter to me as soon as possible after receiving it, always, my boy."

"I'll do et."

Then they made their way back down into the city and parted, the boy to amuse himself on the streets, the major to go to headquarters and make his report.

The commander-in-chief listened to Andre's report and then shook his head.

"We haven't enough data to enable us to do any figuring as yet," he said; "if it had been possible to follow the man and see where he went and to whom he delivered the letter, we would then have secured some information that would have been of value to us, likely."

"Yes, but it would have been impossible to follow the man without his knowledge in broad daylight."

"True; we will simply have to wait, and if there is anything of importance back of this affair it will come to the surface sooner or later."

"Yes, your excellency."

CHAPTER II.

"GUSTAVUS."

"Major Andre, I am sure that I can guess the identity of the author of those letters you have been receiving."

"You think you know who 'Gustavus' is, do you?"

"Yes."

Major Andre smiled and said:

"I, too, have a suspicion regarding his identity, your excellency."

"Ah, indeed? Who do you think the person is?"

Major Andre hesitated slightly, and then said:

"I suspect that my correspondent is General Arnold."

General Clinton nodded.

"That is my guess also," he said; "and I am convinced that he is honest in this matter and that he fully intends to deliver up the highland stronghold, West Point, to us."

"That is the way I have figured it out, sir, but I am puzzled. I would not have thought that General Arnold could do such a thing."

General Clinton smiled in a knowing manner.

"You are thinking of his record as a patriot officer, of the brave deeds he has performed on the battlefield, of the grand work for the rebel cause that he did at Saratoga; is it not so?"

Major Andre nodded.

"Yes, that was what I was thinking of, and I cannot conceive how a man who has done what he has could ever think of turning traitor."

"Did you ever stop to think that a brave man might also be an ambitious one?" the general asked.

"No; but I can easily understand that this might be so."

"Yes, and I think that General Arnold has always been an ambitious man. I believe that he has been eager to rise higher and higher in the hope that should anything happen to General Washington he might be made commander-in-chief of the patriot army."

"Ah!" breathed Major Andre.

"But he has met with disappointment after disappointment. He has seen younger, and as compared to himself, inexperienced officers advanced till they outranked him, and this has embittered him, and now he is going to get revenge on Congress by delivering up West Point into our hands."

"Perhaps you are right, sir."

"I am sure that I am right. I am so sure of it, in fact, that I am going to go ahead and make arrangements to send a fleet up the river, so that as soon as the arrangements have been completed the attack may be made and the stronghold captured. It is my belief that the capture of West Point just at this time will practically end the war."

"That seems to be a reasonable supposition, your excellency."

"Yes, and I am going to begin getting ready for the trip up the river at once. Admiral Rodney has just arrived and is going to the West Indies, but I will have him remain long enough to go with us."

"That is a good idea, sir."

"I think so."

General Clinton kept his word.

A large force of British soldiers were sent aboard the vessels and everything was got in readiness for the trip.

Rumors were sent out that the fleet was going to go to the Chesapeake bay.

This was to deceive the patriots should word be gotten to them that a fleet was getting ready to move.

When this had been accomplished, General Clinton and Major Andre held another interview.

"There is a matter I wish to talk over with you, Major Andre," said the general. "The correspondence you have had with 'Gustavus' has reached its culmination, so to speak, and there is nothing more that can be written; there is, however, the matter of details that should be talked over, and of course, a personal interview must be arranged. The question I wished to ask you is this: Will you go and attend to this matter yourself?"

"Certainly; I shall be glad to do so, your excellency."

"Very well; then write another letter, telling him that a personal interview is desired, and for him to name the date and place of meeting."

"Very well; I will do so, sir."

Andre went to his room, wrote the letter, sent it by the boy, who delivered it to the messenger at the usual rendezvous, and two days later a letter was received in reply stating that a personal interview could be had, and naming the place as a point of land three miles below Stony Point, on the west side of the river. The time set for the interview was midnight of the 21st of September.

It was now the 19th.

"That is all right," said General Clinton; "you will go up the river to-morrow on board the sloop-of-war Vulture, and will be on hand at the appointed time."

"Very well, sir; that is satisfactory to me."

The two discussed the affair for a long time; General Clinton had numerous things that he wished to impress upon the mind of the young officer.

When they had got through Major Andre went to his own quarters and began making preparations for the work before him.

General Clinton had instructed him to go undisguised, and so this simplified matters greatly.

It did not take him long to do all that was necessary, and then he said to himself:

"Now to see Nellie."

He donned his best uniform and left his room and went out upon the street.

He walked onward till he reached the residence district and presently he ran up the steps of a good-sized building and knocked on the door.

A servant admitted him.

"Tell Miss Nellie that Major Andre is here," he said.

"Yes, sir," and then having shown the major into the parlor, the servant departed to tell her young mistress of the presence of the young officer.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed, and then a beautiful young woman of nineteen or twenty years entered the parlor. This was Nellie Shannon, at that time one of the belles of New York; Major Andre had been paying court to her assiduously, and to tell the truth he was smitten

with her; nor was she indifferent to him. The major was a handsome young man, and the girl had taken a liking to him.

"I have come to tell you that I am going away to-morrow," said the major, after they had exchanged greetings.

"Indeed? Where are you going, Major Andre?" she asked, a slight shade crossing her face.

"That is a secret, Miss Nellie; I am going on private business and my destination must not be known to anyone."

"How long will you be gone, major?"

He was silent a few moments, and then said, soberly:

"I may be gone only a few days, and—I may be gone forever."

The girl turned pale.

"What do you mean?" she half-faltered; "is—is it so—so dangerous as that?"

Major Andre saw he had frightened the girl, so he laughed and said, with a show of carelessness:

"Oh, I think not; forget what I said. I will be back here in a few days, safe and sound."

"I wish you could tell me where you are going," said the girl, wistfully.

"No, I could not do that," smilingly.

They talked quite awhile, and at last the major bade the young lady goodby and took his departure.

"Miss Nellie is a beautiful and most charming young lady," mused the officer, as he wended his way back to his quarters; "and I really believe that I shall ask her to marry me before I leave this country."

Suddenly, as the major was passing a dramshop, the door flew open, and four young men emerged. Had they emerged in the ordinary way it would not have attracted the young officer's attention, but they did not; instead, they were engaged in a struggle—a melee, rather, and a glance was sufficient to show that three were attacking one.

An exclamation of anger and dismay escaped the lips of Major Andre.

He recognized the young man who was being attacked by such odds.

The young man was no other than Nelson Shannon, the twin brother of Nellie Shannon.

Nelson was, as the major well knew, as wild a young fellow as there was in the city; he was always cutting up some kind of a shine, with boon companions, and he was fast going to the bad.

This did not matter to the major, however; Nelson was Nellie's brother, and he was being attacked by three men, and was in need of assistance.

Major Andre was brave, and so he did not hesitate an instant, but went at the three with a vigor that came near making an even thing of the affair.

"That's right, major," cried young Shannon, recklessly. "Give it to the scoundrels! We can thrash a dozen like them. Give it to them, I say!"

One of the assailants happened to land a severe blow on Nelson's jaw just at this moment, however, knocking him

down, unconscious, and this left Major Andre to face the three alone.

"Now give it to the redcoat!" cried one of the three.

They went at the major roughly, and it would have gone hard with him, probably, had not a youth of nineteen years suddenly appeared and taken a hand in the combat.

He was a wonder, when it came to this work. He knocked the three right and left, and in less than a minute they leaped up and sneaked away, glad to escape any further punishment at the hands of the young stranger.

The major turned to thank the young man who had rendered him such signal assistance, but the stranger was nearly half a block away.

"Hold on, friend, I want to talk to you," said the major. "I wish to thank you for what you did for me."

"I haven't time to stop," was the reply. "I am in a hurry. You are welcome to the little that I did."

A few moments later he turned the corner and disappeared from view.

Then the major assisted Nelson Shannon to rise, he having just recovered consciousness.

"Did we thrash them?" young Shannon asked.

"Yes, 'we' thrashed them," replied the major. "Now you had better go home, my friend."

"All right; but I'm much obliged, major. Say, I'll speak a good word to Sis for you, old fellow."

"All right, Nelson," with a smile.

Then they parted, the young man to go to his home, and the major to go to his quarters.

CHAPTER III.

JOINING THE BRITISH ARMY.

The young man who had come to Major Andre's assistance was no other than Dick Slater, the captain of a company of youths who were known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick was in the city on a spying expedition.

News had reached General Washington, at West Point, that the British were getting a fleet in readiness to move, and he had sent Dick down to try to learn the intended destination of the fleet.

The youth had managed to enter the city unobserved, and was now doing his best to acquire some reliable information.

He had heard the rumors that the fleet was to sail for the Chesapeake Bay, but he was shrewd, and did not give this rumor much credence.

He had taken note of the fact that it was a redcoat who gave out this information, as a rule, and this made him doubt it.

"I believe that is thrown out as a blind," he told himself; "it is my belief that the fleet intend to go somewhere else, though where it intends to go is a mystery."

He was determined to find out, if such a thing was possible.

After leaving Major Andre, he made his way toward Broadway, but had gone only a short distance, when he heard the patter of feet behind him, and turned to see a boy of perhaps twelve years.

"Say, air ye ther feller what helped Major Andre in de fight, back yonder?" the boy asked.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Well, he wants you to come to him."

"What for?"

"I dunno; but he saw me an' told me ter run an' ketch ye an' bring ye ter his room."

Dick hesitated.

He did not know whether it would be safe to go or not. He was sure that Major Andre did not know him, but there might be other officers in the building who knew him, and if he was recognized, he would be arrested and shot or hanged as a spy.

Finally he decided to risk it. By going there, he might learn something of interest.

He had rendered the young British officer a favor, and naturally the major would want to treat him kindly.

He turned, saying:

"Lead the way to the major's room, my boy."

The boy did as told, and soon they were in the building in which the officer had his quarters.

They went upstairs to the second floor, and to the door of one of the front rooms. The boy knocked on the door.

"Come in," called a voice.

The boy opened the door.

"Heer's ther feller ye wanted ter see," he said.

"All right, Ben; here's something for you." The major tossed the boy a silver shilling.

The boy caught it, grinned, said "Thank ye, sir," and closed the door, Dick having entered.

The major advanced and extended his hand, at the same time giving Dick a close scrutiny.

"I thank you again for the assistance you rendered me," he said.

"You are more than welcome," was the reply.

"I am Major Andre, sir; may I ask your name?"

"Albert Disbrow." Of course, Dick would not think of giving his own name. He was too well known by reputation as a daring spy.

"Where do you live, Mr. Disbrow?"

"Up in Westchester County."

"I suppose you live on a farm?"

"Yes."

"You are loyal to the king, of course?"

"Oh, yes."

Major Andre pointed to a chair.

"Be seated," he said.

Dick took the seat indicated.

The major was washing his face and hands, and when he had finished, he sat down and look scrutinizingly at Dick.

"You are a likely looking young fellow," he said; "have you ever thought of joining the army?"

Dick shook his head.

"No, sir," he said.

"Don't you think you would like to do so?"

Dick looked thoughtful.

"I don't know, sir," he said, slowly; "I am not sure that I would like the life of a soldier."

"It is the only life, Disbrow."

It was very evident that the major was very well pleased with the life of a soldier; but then he was an officer, and could give commands, instead of having to obey them; and, too, he lived on the best food obtainable, and had all the pleasant things and few of the unpleasant ones.

"You like it, sir?"

"Yes, indeed; and I am sure you would like it."

"Perhaps I might."

Dick was thinking swiftly. He wondered if he would dare take the chances of pretending to join the British army. He would likely be able to learn what he wished to know, if he were to do so.

"I know you would like it; come, join the army."

Dick hesitated.

Major Andre watched the youth closely, and then said:

"I'll tell you what you do; enroll your name as a soldier of the king, and I will give you a place among the party of soldiers who are to accompany me on a little trip. I have taken a liking to you, on account of the manner in which you came to my assistance, and I wish to have you with me."

Dick was still undecided; he hesitated a while longer, and then said:

"I've a good mind to do it."

"All right; don't hesitate."

"When are you going to start on this trip?"

"To-morrow."

"Perhaps I ought not to ask you where you are going, sir?"

"I don't mind telling you. I am going up the Hudson on a reconnoitering trip."

"Oh, on a ship!"

"Yes."

Instantly Dick leaped to the conclusion that this trip had a connection in some way with the future movements of the fleet, and he decided to pretend to join the army, and so get to take the trip. He felt sure that he would be able to learn something of interest and value.

"I'll join the army," he said.

"All right; I will enroll your name at once."

They talked a while longer, and then the major directed Dick to go down stairs to a large room, on the left of the hall, and get a uniform.

"Here is a note," he said; "hand it to Lieutenant Winslow, and he will see to it that you are given a uniform. He will look after you and assist you in learning the ropes."

"Thank you, Major Andre."

Dick went down stairs to the room, as directed. He found the lieutenant and handed him the letter.

The young officer, who was not much older than Dick, read the note, and said:

"Come with me."

He conducted Dick into another room, and showed him several uniforms hanging on the wall.

"I think you will find one there that will fit you," he said.

"I judge so," was the reply.

Dick selected a uniform that seemed to be about the right size for him.

"You will find a room in which to change your clothes, up stairs," he said; "it is the third one to the left, as you go back along the hall."

"All right."

"There is an extra bunk in there; you may occupy it."

"Very well."

Dick made his way upstairs and to the room in question, and there he changed his clothing.

The uniform fitted him pretty well, and he hung his old garments up in a closet.

Then he went back down stairs and into the room where the other soldiers were, and began making their acquaintance.

He thought it possible that he could acquire some information in that way.

He learned that they were to go aboard a sloop-of-war, the Vulture, on the morrow, and sail up the river; but that was all he did learn. None of the soldiers seemed to have any idea as to the purpose for which the vessel was to make the trip.

Dick felt sure he could learn all about it, after he was on board the vessel, and then, having learned all he needed to, he could leave the ship and hasten to the patriot commander-in-chief with the news.

Dick was a pleasant young fellow, and one who easily made acquaintances and friends; and he soon knew the majority of those present, by name.

They saw he was an unusually intelligent youth, and treated him with more consideration on that account.

The story of how he had aided the major in a street fight had reached their ears, and this made them respect the youth more highly than they otherwise would have done, also.

As they were to be up early in the morning, they lay down rather early that evening, and all got a good night's sleep.

Dick was very well satisfied, and slept as well as any of them.

Next morning, they went to the dock as an escort to Major Andre, and getting into boats, were rowed out to the Vulture. They climbed aboard, and shortly afterward the vessel weighed anchor and sailed up the river.

Where was it bound for?

What was Major Andre's business, what his purpose in making the trip?

Dick was determined to make an attempt to find out.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE VULTURE.

The wind was against the vessel, so it had to tack, in order to beat up the stream.

The soldiers were out on the deck.

This was a new experience for many of them, and they enjoyed it to the full.

The scenery along the Hudson River is sublime, and they watched the changing views with pleasure.

Back and forth across the stream the vessel tacked, each time working its way a bit farther upstream.

This was kept up all day, and when night came on, the vessel was a few miles below Stony Point.

The captain of the vessel and Major Andre were talking in the cabin, after they had eaten supper, and Dick, who caught a glimpse of them through the cabin window, made up his mind that they were talking of the purpose of the trip.

"If I could overhear what they are saying, I am sure that I would learn what this trip is being made for," the youth said to himself.

That was the difficulty, however; it would be dangerous to try to overhear the conversation of the two.

Dick made up his mind to make the attempt, however.

He knew that he could slip into the cabin, which was divided into three rooms, by the doorway, and then, if he had good luck, he might overhear something that was said in the second room.

It was dark, and he did not believe his action would be noticed for the room into which the cabin door opened was dark. Once in there, he would be safe from observation, at least for a time.

He made his way softly to the door.

He glanced around; no one was in sight, anywhere near.

He tried the door; it was unlocked.

He opened it and passed into the entrance room.

Then he closed the door, and stood still, listening.

He heard no sound.

The Liberty Boy realized that he was doing a very risky thing.

He was practically taking his life in his hands.

To play the spy on shore, where he had ample room to run, or make his escape, in case of discovery, was bad enough; but to play the spy on shipboard, where he had no chance to run, if discovered, was much worse.

Dick was a brave youth, however; he could not let the danger deter him.

He stole across the floor.

He felt along the opposite wall till he got hold of the knob of the second door, and then he opened it, softly.

He had feared there would be a light in this room; but there was none. That there was a light in the third room was evident, however, for there was a streak of light showing under the door.

The cabin consisted of three large rooms, with state-rooms at the sides.

Dick tiptoed across the floor and took up his position by the door.

He placed his ear to the keyhole.

He could hear the voices of the captain and Major Andre with tolerable distinctness.

Dick listened eagerly.

He heard enough so that he knew that Major Andre was going to a point near Stony Point to meet some one who was supposed to be a patriot who had turned traitor.

"General Clinton thinks that the traitor is no other than General Arnold," Dick heard Andre say.

Dick started and almost uttered an exclamation aloud.

Could it be possible that the British commander-in-chief's suspicion was correct, he asked himself.

Dick could not bring himself to believe it.

"No, no!" he told himself; "it is not so; it cannot be! General Arnold would never turn traitor. He is too brave an officer, and too honorable to do such a thing. There is a mistake somewhere."

"Well, in case the general's supposition is correct, it must be that Arnold intends to deliver the fortification at West Point into our hands," said the captain.

"That is what General Clinton thinks."

"That will be a terrible blow to the rebel cause, Major Andre."

"It will practically end the war, I am sure," was the reply.

"And where do you wish to be put ashore? Where are you to meet this man?"

"In a clump of timber about four miles south of Stony Point."

"On the west side, eh?"

"Yes; there is a point of land extending into the stream, at the place where I am to meet him."

"Very good; I will set you ashore there."

Just then Dick heard the sound of a door opening, and a little later he heard footsteps in the first room of the cabin.

Some one had entered, and Dick realized that he was in danger of being discovered.

Perhaps the person would go out again, right away, however, Dick told himself.

He listened and waited, and then suddenly a light flared up; Dick had left the connecting door slightly open, and the light could be plainly seen.

"Jove, I don't like that!" thought Dick. "If I am discovered, it will be all up with me!"

He glanced around him, enough light entering the room he was in, so that he could see tolerably well, and, feeling

that he must conceal himself, he started toward one of the staterooms.

He had taken only two steps when the connecting door was suddenly thrown wide open, and a man appeared in the doorway.

He caught sight of Dick, and an exclamation escaped his lips. "What are you doing here?"

Dick made no reply. He felt that anything he could say would not help matters.

He gave a quick, flashing glance around him, seeking for some avenue of escape, but could find none.

Then he met the officer's gaze firmly, and said:

"I wanted to see Major Andre."

The officer—he was a captain—eyed Dick keenly and suspiciously.

"That is a rather unlikely story; you did not expect to find him in this room, where there was no light, did you?"

"I was going to go into the next room; I think he is in there."

The officer shook his head.

"I do not believe you," he said; "it is my opinion that you were playing the eavesdropper, and if that is the case, then it is probable that you are a spy. You are a new recruit, I understand."

"Yes, I am a new recruit, but I am not a spy, I assure you."

"That is as it may be; I am going to turn you over to the major to do with as he sees fit."

"I wish you wouldn't do that," said Dick; "I assure you there is no need of doing so."

The captain smiled somewhat sarcastically.

"I thought you just said that you were looking for the major."

"So I did say, sir; and I was looking for him."

"Yet you don't want to be taken before him."

"Not under suspicion, as a prisoner; I wish to speak to him, but don't want that he shall be prejudiced against me."

"Well, I will take you before him, and will tell him where I found you, then let him settle the affair for himself."

"Very well."

Dick was tempted to make a dash at the captain, knock him down and then try to reach the deck and leap overboard, but just as he was making up his mind, he heard footsteps in the other room, and two more officers appeared in the doorway.

"Hello, captain, whom have you there?" asked one.

"It is that new recruit; and he doesn't seem to be able to satisfactorily explain his presence here in this room."

"I have explained it to you, captain," said Dick.

"Not satisfactorily, however." Then he took Dick by the arm, saying:

"Come with me, and we will see what Major Andre has to say about the matter."

Dick realized that it would be useless to attempt to es-

cape. It would only end in death or capture, and in the latter event he would probably be wounded.

He walked beside the officer, to the connecting door, and the captain knocked.

"Who is there?" came in Major Andre's voice.

"It is I, Captain Maytree."

"Come in, captain."

The officer opened the door, and entered the room where the commander of the vessel and Major Andre sat; Dick of course was beside him, and the two officers came as far as the doorway.

The two men stared at the captain and his companion in amazement.

"What is this?" the major cried, looking at Dick wonderingly.

"I found this young man in the next room, Major Andre," said Captain Maytree; "the room was in darkness at the time, and he has no very good explanation of his presence there."

The major looked at Dick suspiciously.

"What does this mean, Disbrow?" he asked.

"I explained to the captain, here, Major Andre," said Dick, quietly; "I told him that I was hunting for you."

There was a somewhat skeptical look on the major's face.

It was evident that he was somewhat doubtful regarding the truth of the young man's statement.

"Why did you wish to see me?" he asked.

"I wanted to ask you to let me go ashore and visit my home."

"Ah, indeed? Is your home near here?"

"Yes, sir, it is over on the east side of the river, and about four miles distant."

"Why did you wish to go there?"

"So that I might tell my parents that I have joined the army."

"That is a pretty good story," said the major; "but I am afraid that you are not telling the exact truth."

"Oh, yes I am."

But the young officer shook his head.

"I am inclined to think that you are a spy, Disbrow; and it would not surprise me if you turned out to be a rebel."

"I beg your pardon, Major Andre," said one of the two officers who were standing in the doorway, "but I am sure that I know who this young fellow is. I have been trying to think where I have seen him before, and I think I know now."

"Who is he?" asked Andre.

"He is Dick Slater!"

Andre started and looked amazed.

"What! Dick Slater, the captain of the Liberty Boys?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I am sure it is he."

"Then we have made an important capture," said the major.

"Yes, yes!" in chorus from the rest.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE RIVER.

Dick tried to argue the major out of the notion that he was Dick Slater.

"The gentleman is wrong," he said; "I am not Dick Slater."

"I would be willing to swear to it," said the officer. "I saw you once, about a year ago, and I know you. Your face is not one that could be easily mistaken."

Dick saw it would do no good to make further denial; neither did he acknowledge that he was Dick Slater.

"We have no time to fool away with you, just at this time," said the major; "so will confine you in one of the rooms in the hold. Bind his arms, gentlemen, and take him away."

Dick would have tried to escape, had it been worth while; but he realized that such an attempt would be foolhardy in the extreme, and he made no resistance.

The officers bound his arms together behind his back, and then led him away.

He was conducted down into the hold, and placed in one of the compartments near the center of the vessel.

Then the officers went back up on deck, leaving Dick alone in the darkness.

He was not feeling very happy, as may well be supposed.

He had gotten himself into deep trouble, through engaging in spywork on board the vessel.

Still, he was not sorry he had done so, for he had secured some very valuable information.

If he could, by any possible chance, make his escape, he might be able to get to West Point in time to learn whether or not Benedict Arnold really were a traitor, and if so, then his plan could be defeated.

But there was the difficulty.

Could he escape?

There seemed to be a doubt, and a great one at that, about this.

The Liberty Boy was determined to escape if such a thing was possible, however.

He at once began tugging and straining at his bonds.

The rope that was around his wrists had been securely tied, however, and it seemed that it would be an impossibility to get them free.

Dick was not one to be easily discouraged, however.

He would not despair until absolutely certain that there was no use of trying any further.

He tugged away until red in the face, and still he did not seem to be making any progress.

The rope seemed as tightly tied as ever.

Dick worked steadily, with brief intervals for rest, for several hours, and then gave up and quit, for he had not loosened the ropes a bit. They were as tight as ever.

This was bad, but he decided to make the best of it.

He could not get his hands free, and so that nipped in the bud, so to speak, any attempt to escape.

He finally arranged his body as comfortably as was possible, and went to sleep.

He slept all night, and was awakened by some one coming down into the hold with some food for him.

It was one of the common soldiers, and Dick saw, up through the hatchway, the blue sky; it was daylight.

The soldier freed Dick's hands, to let him use them in the work of feeding himself, and then he stood back a little distance, holding a cocked pistol in his hand.

"If you try to make a break for liberty, I will shoot you," the soldier said.

"Never fear; I won't be so foolish as that," said Dick.

He ate a hearty breakfast, and the soldier tied his wrists together.

He was not very particular, however, nor very observant, for Dick spread his wrists apart to such an extent that when the man had gone, he found that he could, by dint of hard labor, succeed in working his hands free.

He did this, and had just succeeded in freeing his arms when he was startled by hearing the booming of cannon.

"Hello, what does that mean, I wonder?" he asked himself.

He heard hurried footsteps on the deck, as the sailors and soldiers ran hither and thither, and he judged that the ship had been fired upon by the patriot gunners in the works over on the other side of the river.

Dick managed to climb up and look out of a porthole, and he saw that his guess was correct. The patriots were firing on the ship.

The vessel had been anchored, with her head up stream, but now the anchor was gotten up, and the sloop-of-war wore around and headed down the stream.

It was evident that the British did not want to take any chances of being sent to the bottom.

Dick did not want to be carried back down the river, if he could help it; but he did not see how he was to help it.

The porthole was too small for him to crawl through, or he would have done so and dropped into the water and swam ashore.

He dropped back down to the floor and made his way to the ladder which led up to the hatchway.

He climbed the ladder and pushed against the lower side of the hatchway.

It did not give.

It was fastened down.

"Well, it looks as if I am to remain a prisoner here and be taken back to New York," said Dick to himself.

He did not like the idea, but how was he to help himself?

He would have to wait and watch for a chance to get out and away.

Presently the ship stopped, and Dick realized the truth: The vessel had merely dropped down the stream far enough to be out of range of the guns in the fort.

"I am glad of that," he told himself.

The day passed very slowly to Dick.

As noon drew near Dick thought of the fact that some one might come down with some food for him and find him with his hands free.

He hardly knew what to do under the circumstances.

After some thought, he decided upon a bold stroke.

He would secrete himself behind some coils of rope, which were piled up near the ladder, and when the man came with the food, he would leap upon the fellow and overpower him. Then he would climb up, watch his chance and run to the rail and leap overboard.

He did not have long to wait.

The hatchway was opened presently, and a soldier was seen coming down the ladder, carrying some food in a dish.

Dick got ready for action.

He rose from his knees and stood in a crouching posture.

The soldier did not notice that Dick was not where he had been when he was down in the morning—he was the same man—and so he was not suspecting anything, and was taken wholly by surprise when Dick leaped upon him and bore him to the floor.

The dish dropped and was broken, and then quite a struggle ensued.

The soldier made an attempt to cry out, but Dick got him by the throat and he could not do so.

The struggle grew less and less fierce as the soldier became weaker and weaker, and at last he became wholly unconscious.

Then Dick dropped him to the floor, and climbed the ladder.

He glanced cautiously out of the hatchway.

There was no one close at hand.

The Liberty Boy decided that he would have as good a chance right then as he would be likely to have, and so he quickly climbed up through the hatchway, and made a dash for the rail.

Some of the soldiers down near the stern saw him and gave utterance to a yell of amazement.

They did not know what it meant. As Dick had on a British uniform, they supposed he was a British soldier; but they could not think what ailed him.

"Hold on!"

"What's the matter?"

"Hey, there!"

"Stop!"

Such were a few of the exclamations hurled at Dick, but he paid no heed.

He was intent on getting away, and he cleared the rail at a bound and struck the water with a splash, going under out of sight.

"What's the matter with him, anyhow?"

"He must be crazy."

"That's right!"

"Man overboard!"

Such were the cries, and then one yelled:

"I'll wager that was Dick Slater, the rebel prisoner, and that he is going to make his escape!"

"Dick Slater! Dick Slater has escaped!" went up from

the lips of a number, and then a rush was made to the rail, while a score of muskets were leveled.

"Come back!" cried one of the officers; "come back, or we will shoot you dead!"

He gave this command just as Dick came to the surface, but the youth paid no attention, and swam rapidly toward the shore.

"Fire!" roared the officer.

The soldiers obeyed.

Crash! Roar!

Loudly the volley rang out.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER ANDRE.

The bullets splattered all around Dick, but luckily none hit him.

He continued to swim with all his might.

The vessel was nearer the west shore than the east, and Dick was not long in reaching it.

He drew himself up out of the water, and looked back.

A boat was coming toward the shore, with half a dozen soldiers in it.

They were going to pursue him.

"Well, if they catch me, they will do more than I think they can," he told himself.

He set out on the run at once, and dashed through the timber.

The soldiers reached the shore, leaped out and followed, but they did not catch sight of the fugitive.

They soon gave up the pursuit and went back to the boat, got in and returned to the ship.

"Did he escape?" the officer asked.

"Yes."

"Well, that is bad."

"Yes, so it is."

Then the commander of the force of soldiers on the vessel turned to another officer and said:

"I am uneasy about Major Andre; he should have been back to the ship long ago."

"You are right; I fear something has happened to him."

"Well, we will stay here until we are sure he is not coming, and then we will return to New York."

"Yes, that will be the proper thing to do, I guess."

Meanwhile what of Dick?

He ran on and on at as rapid a pace as possible, and as he heard no sounds of pursuit, he made up his mind that the soldiers had not pursued him far.

He made his way up the river, and suddenly he was leaped upon by a couple of men and borne to the ground.

"Who are you? Why have you done this?" asked Dick, at the same time struggling with all his might.

"You will find out, soon enough, you cowardly thief!" was the savage reply.

The two were too strong for Dick, and they succeeded in overpowering him and binding his arms. Then they jerked him to his feet and led him along through the timber.

"Who are you? Where are you taking me?" asked Dick.

"You will know in due time," was the reply.

"Who do you think I am?" asked Dick.

"We know who you are."

"Then you know I am no thief; gentlemen, you are making a mistake, and I hope you will let me go."

"No, we are not making a mistake, young fellow; we know who you are."

They conducted Dick a mile at least, and then led him into an old cabin which stood deep in the forest.

"Sit down," said one, indicating an old stool.

Dick did so.

He expected that the men would explain why they had captured him and brought him there; but they did not do so.

In fact, they did not stay in the cabin; after exchanging a few words in a low voice, they turned and went out, closing the door behind them, and fastening it.

Dick wondered who the men were and why they had made a prisoner of him.

He was greatly disappointed by the happening, for he had hoped that he would be able to get to West Point and learn whether there was any truth in the suspicion of Major Andre to the effect that General Arnold was a traitor.

"I must try and get away from here," he told himself; "perhaps I may be able to do so."

He began working at his bonds, but found that they were very securely tied.

He worked with all his strength, however, hoping that he might get his arms free in time.

He listened as he worked, for he expected that his captors would return at any moment.

They did not come, however, even after several hours had passed; Dick, almost exhausted, rested a while. He had loosened the rope binding his arms to some extent, and thought it possible that if the men did not return too soon, he might succeed in getting free and making his escape.

When he had rested sufficiently he again went to work, and he tugged and strained at the rope in a desperate effort to get it loosened.

He was getting it loosened to a certain extent, and at last, along toward evening, he succeeded in freeing his hands.

He was free at last.

He lost no time in trying the door.

It was fastened.

He kicked against it, and it flew open.

He stepped out of doors, and as he did so, he heard a yell, and looking in the direction the sound came from he saw the two men who had captured him, coming.

He bounded away at the top of his speed, and they came after him as fast as they could run.

Dick was not much afraid now. He felt that he could

make his escape, for he did not believe that the men could run as fast as himself.

On he ran, and after him they came.

He drew away from them, however, and left them gradually behind.

At last he left them so far behind that he could neither see nor hear them, and he felt that he was safe, so far as danger from them was concerned.

On he ran.

He had not paid any particular attention to the direction he was going, but now saw that he was heading up the river.

Presently, just as it was growing dusk, he came to a large house standing on a knoll.

He saw a young fellow of perhaps fifteen years in the barn-yard, milking the cows, and Dick climbed over the fence and asked the boy who lived there.

"Josh Smith; but he hain't ter hum, ef ye wanter see 'im," was the reply.

Dick had heard of Joshua Smith, and it was said that he was a strong Tory.

"Perhaps I may get some information out of this boy," he told himself. Aloud he said:

"Where has Mr. Smith gone?"

"I dunno whur him an' thet other feller went."

"Oh, there was a man with him, then?"

"Yas, er feller whut came here to see him."

Dick started.

"Great Guns!" he said to himself; "I wonder if that could have been Major Andre?"

"What kind of looking fellow was he?"

The boy told as nearly as he could, and Dick was quite sure, from the description, that the man was no other than the major.

"Which way did they go?" he asked.

The boy pointed toward the south.

"They went in that direction," he said.

"How long was this man here?"

"All day. Him an' anuther man come here early this mornin', an' hed breakfas'; then they went upstairs an' wuz up there till nearly noon; then ther other man came down, went down ter ther river an' got in er boat an' went up ther river."

Dick started. Could this have been General Arnold, he asked himself.

He feared that it was no other than the dashing patriot commander at West Point.

What should he do?

If the patriot had been here and held an interview with Major Andre, then it was too late to do anything other than try to capture the British messenger and inform General Washington of the probable treason of the commander of the fort.

What should he do first?

Should he go to the fort? Or should he go and try to trap the British messenger?

A little thought decided him. The messenger would

escape unless caught soon, while Arnold might remain in the fort at West Point a week or two, thinking that he was safe, and that no one suspected him of being a traitor.

Yes, clearly the thing to do was to follow Joshua Smith and Major Andre and try to capture the latter.

The trouble was that he had no horse.

He wondered if he might not secure one here.

"Say, my boy," he remarked; "I have some important business with Mr. Smith; could I have the loan of a horse, so that I may go and overtake him?"

The boy looked thoughtful, and then said:

"Theer's er hoss in ther stable; but I don't know whether Josh Smith 'ud like fer ye ter take 'im er not. Mebby he wouldn't keer; uv course, et hain't nothin' ter me, fur I'm on'y ther chore boy."

"I'll take all the blame, my boy."

Then Dick hastened into the stable and bridled and saddled the horse and led him forth.

"Ye look like ye hed be'n in ther water," said the boy, who had finished milking and was standing there, pail in hand.

"Yes, I fell in the river," said Dick. He did not vouchsafe any further details.

He leaped into the saddle, and said:

"Which way do you think did Mr. Smith and his companion go? Is it likely that they will cross the river?"

"I think I heerd 'em say sumthin' erbout King's Ferry."

"All right; I'll go that way; likely they will cross the river."

Then Dick rode away.

He urged the horse forward at a gallop, for the boy had told him that Smith and his companion had two hours' start of him.

"I'll have to ride hard and fast if I overtake them," he told himself.

So he urged his horse to its best speed.

When he reached King's Ferry, he asked the ferryman if two men had crossed there within the past two hours.

"Yas, Josh Smith an' another feller crossed erbout two hours ergo," was the reply.

"All right; I want to cross, too."

When the other shore was reached, Dick rode off the boat and away up the slope beyond.

"Now I wonder which way they would go?" he asked himself.

He decided that they would take the road leading toward Tarrytown.

"I will go that way, too," he thought.

It was now dark, and very dark at that. He could not see the road at all; could not see his hand before his face.

He let the rein lie loose on the horse's neck, for he knew the animal had better eyes than himself, when it came to seeing in the dark.

At last Dick decided to stop.

He feared that he would get lost, and in that case he would not be able to capture Major Andre.

He paused at a house, and knocked on the door.

A man came and opened it, after a considerable time had elapsed, and he asked, gruffly:

"Who air ye, an' whut d'ye want?"

"I am a traveler, and would like to spend the night with you, sir."

"Ye mean ther res' uv ther night, don't ye?"

Dick laughed good-naturedly.

"Yes, that is what I mean. It is so dark that I am afraid I will lose my way."

"Got er hoss?"

"Yes."

"All right; I'll take 'im ter ther stable. Ye go on inter ther house."

They made their way around the house to the stable, and when the horse had been led into a stall, and the bridle and saddle had been taken off, they went back and entered the house.

There was a candle on a table, and in one corner of the big sitting-room were two bunks. The man had occupied one, and he now pointed to the other, after having closed and barred the door, and said:

"Crawl in thar, stranger, an' git some sleep; we'll talk in ther mornin'."

Dick was tired and sleepy, and with a "thank you, sir," he did as told.

He had scarcely touched the bunk before he was sound asleep.

He was awakened next morning by the noise made by his host, who was busily engaged in cooking at the fireplace.

Dick leaped out of the bunk, and said, "Good-morning."

"Mornin'," was the reply; "ye got some sleep, did ye?"

"Yes, I slept like a top."

"Air ye hungry?"

"Hungry as a bear."

"Good! Then ye'll enj'y this heer bacon an' johnny-cake, I'll bet."

"You are right."

Presently the bacon and johnny-cake were done, and then the two sat up to the table and ate heartily. The host saw his visitor was a handsome young fellow, and was pretty much pleased with his appearance; the way the youth demolished the bacon and johnny-cake won the man's heart, for he was one who believed that anyone who ate common food with a relish was all right.

"I kinder like ye, young feller," he said; "whut's yer name?"

"I rather like you, too, sir," said Dick; "and if I am not mistaken, you are a patriot." Dick wished to find out about this matter, before telling his name.

"Ye bet I'm er patriot, an' I don' keer who knows et. I'll bet ye air er patriot, too; I kin tell et by ther looks uv ye."

Dick laughed.

"You are right," he acknowledged; "I am a patriot, and my name is Dick Slater."

"I've heerd tell uv ye, Dick Slater, and I'm glad ter know ye."

"The same to you; what is your name?"

"Sam Johnson."

They got very well acquainted, and when Dick was ready to take his leave, Sam Johnson shook his hand heartily and urged him to stop if ever he passed that way again.

Dick promised to do so, and then bidding the man goodbye, mounted and rode away.

"Now to see if I can overtake, or head off Major Andre," said Dick to himself; "it is barely possible, however, that he may have stopped at a farmhouse, the same as I did, and in that case he might be behind me."

Presently Dick was challenged:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTURE OF ANDRE.

Dick brought his horse to a stop at once.

He had had enough experience to know that it was best to give instant obedience to a command of that kind.

As he did so three men stepped out in the road in front of him.

They held muskets in their hands, and were evidently in readiness to fire, had Dick made any effort to try to get away."

One of the three had a red coat on, a coat like those worn by Hessian soldiers, and Dick became fearful that he was to be captured again.

Suddenly one of the three exclaimed:

"He is Dick Slater, the patriot scout and spy, and the captain of the Liberty Boys."

"Is that so?" another asked.

Of course, Dick did not like to admit this. He still believed the three to be redcoats in disguise, or Tories.

He hesitated, and the red-coated fellow said:

"Don't be afraid to own up, if you are Dick Slater; we are patriots ourselves."

Dick pointed to the fellow's coat.

"Why are you wearing that coat, then?" he asked.

"Oh, I took that off a redcoat that didn't have use for it any longer," was the careless rejoinder; "it answers very well, though I don't like its color myself."

"Just supposing that I were Dick Slater," he said slowly and thoughtfully; "just supposing it, what would you do?"

"Well, we would shake hands with you, say we were glad to make your acquaintance and let you pass on unmolested," was the prompt reply.

"Very well; then you may do so; I acknowledge that I am Dick Slater."

The three at once shook hands with Dick. The man with the red coat said his name was Paulding, and that his comrades' names were VanWart and Williams.

"We are members of a party of seven, who are watching

for some cowboys that robbed a patriot farmer not far from here, last night, and if we get sight of them, there will be some lively work, I tell you!"

Dick was struck with an idea.

"Say, boys," he said; "I am going to take you into my confidence. I am looking for a British officer who has been up north of this point, conferring with some traitor who is plotting to deliver West Point into the enemy's hand, I think—and I fear that I may have got ahead of him. If he should come along, I want you to capture him."

"All right; what kind of a looking fellow is he?"

"A young man, perhaps twenty-four years of age."

"How is he dressed?"

"In a rough suit."

Dick's British uniform had been made soaking wet when he leaped into the river from the British ship, it will be remembered, and when it got dry, it drew up to such an extent as to make it very uncomfortable to wear. Before leaving the home of Sam Johnson, he had exchanged the uniform for a patriot uniform which the man had. This suit was too large for Dick, but it served the purpose, being loose and comfortable.

"All right," said Paulding; "we'll keep our eyes open, and if the fellow comes along, we will stop him. Shall we search him?"

"Yes, and if you find any incriminating documents on his person, hold him prisoner."

"Perhaps we had better do that, anyway."

"I judge that you are right."

"What are you going to do?"

"I will ride on down the road a few miles, in the hope of seeing him?"

"I don't think you will do so; we have been here at least an hour, and no one has gone past."

"He may have got past before you came."

"That is possible, of course."

Dick talked a few moments longer, and then rode on down the road.

The three patriots went back in among the trees, and concealed themselves.

Nearly an hour passed, and then a horseman was seen coming down the road.

"Say, I'll wager that that is the fellow Dick Slater told us about," said Paulding.

"Looks like him," said VanWart.

"Get ready for work, boys," said Paulding.

"We are ready," was the reply.

They waited till the horseman was close at hand, and then they leaped out and halted him.

"Who are you?" the newcomer asked.

"Oh, it doesn't matter who we are," replied Paulding; "the question is, Who are you?"

"I am a traveler, bound for New York."

"Humph! What is your name?"

"John Anderson."

"All right, Mr. John Anderson; what side do you favor in this war?"

The horseman, who was no other than Andre, who had parted from Joshua Smith several miles back, took note of the red coat worn by Paulding, and jumped to the conclusion that the three were cowboys, who were supposed to be in sympathy with the British cause, and said:

"I guess I favor the side you do, judging by the coat you are wearing; you are loyalists, are you not?"

"Yes, certainly," was the ready reply.

"Well, so am I."

"Good! I think you are the man we are looking for," said Paulding grimly; "just get down off that horse!"

"Why—how—what do you mean?" stammered Andre; "you said you were loyalists."

"And lied," with a laugh; "we just did that to draw you out and get you to acknowledge you were a redcoat, that is all."

A groan escaped the lips of Major Andre; he looked up and then down the road, as if half tempted to make an effort to escape; then he gave up the idea, and with a sigh, alighted.

"Take off your coat."

Andre obeyed.

"Now sit down by that tree."

Paulding pointed to a tree near at hand, and the British officer took the seat indicated.

Paulding tossed his red coat on the ground and finding no documents in Andre's blue one, he donned it.

He began feeling in the pockets of Andre's vest and trousers.

No documents of any kind were found in any of the pockets, however.

"Let me see," mused Paulding; "now where else might he have papers hidden?"

"Maybe he has some in his shoes," suggested Williams.

Instantly Andre changed color.

The three noticed this, and VanWart cried:

"I'll bet you have struck it, old fellow; off with his shoes!"

They pulled his shoes off, but still no papers were to be seen. In handling the stockinged feet of the suspect, however, a rustling sound was heard, and instantly Paulding grabbed hold of one of the stockings and pulled it off. As he did so, out dropped a folded paper.

"Hurrah, here we have it!" Paulding cried, seizing the paper; "I thought we would find something of the kind."

Then he pulled off the other stocking, and another document was found.

Just at this moment Williams said:

"Yonder comes a horseman, and I think it is Dick Slater."

Andre gave utterance to an exclamation and looked in the direction indicated.

Then he quickly drew his watch—a handsome gold one—and his purse out of his pocket and handed them to Paulding, saying:

"Give me back those papers and let me go, and the watch and purse are yours."

The three laughed scornfully.

"You don't know your men," said Paulding; "we are honest men, and patriots, and all the British gold that was ever coined could not buy us."

At this instant Dick Slater rode up.

"See!" said Paulding, holding up a paper for Dick to look at; "this is a drawing of West Point. This man is a British spy!"

"You are right," said Dick; "you have made an important capture."

CHAPTER VIII.

AT NORTH CASTLE.

Then he leaped down off his horse and approached the prisoner.

"Well, Major Andre, we meet again!" he said.

"Yes," was the reply; "but how did you manage to escape from the hold of the ship?"

"I choked the soldier who brought me my dinner, climbed up out of the hold and leaped overboard and swam ashore," was the reply. Then he added:

"Well, you have got yourself into trouble, now, major."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. You have been caught with incriminating documents on your person."

They talked awhile, and then Dick ordered that the major's hands be bound.

This was done.

"Now what shall we do with him?" asked Paulding.

"I'll tell you what to do," said Dick; "take him, together with these documents, to Colonel Jameson, at North Castle."

"All right; what are you going to do?"

"I am going to West Point as fast as my horse can carry me."

"Ah!"

"Yes; you see one of these papers is a drawing of the stronghold at West Point, and another is an itemized statement of the number of the troops; while here is a small paper, a pass made out in the name of John Anderson, and signed by Benedict Arnold, major general. That proves that Arnold is a traitor, and I must get there and see to it that he is captured."

"All right; you go along, and we will see to it that this fellow reaches North Castle and is turned over to Colonel Jameson."

"Very well; whatever you do, don't let him escape."

"There is no danger of that."

"Good-by."

"Good-by, and good luck."

The three started up the road, and Dick did the same. He went faster, being on horseback, then the three men could go on foot. Of course, Andre was on the back of

his horse, but the animal would not be permitted to go faster than a walk.

At Tarrytown Dick turned into the road leading toward King's Ferry, while the three patriots, with their prisoner, continued onward toward White Plains, this being the most direct route to North Castle.

The three, with their prisoner, stayed all night at the home of a patriot farmer about three miles west of White Plains, and in the morning continued their journey.

They arrived at North Castle that afternoon.

They went at once to the building occupied by Colonel Jameson as headquarters.

When the colonel heard their story, he was somewhat amazed.

He examined the documents that had been found in Major Andre's stockings, and being an honorable man himself, he could not believe that General Arnold was a traitor.

"In my opinion," he said to one of the officers, after Andre had been taken to the guard house, "this is some scheme on the part of the British to cast suspicion on a brave and honorable patriot officer. Some one is trying to obtain revenge on him for his grand work at Saratoga."

The officer nodded, but there was a somewhat doubtful look on his face. He did not have as much faith in Arnold as the colonel had.

"You may be right," he said, "but there is a possibility that you are wrong. Arnold may be a traitor, after all."

"I refuse to believe it," was the decided reply; "I cannot think that Arnold would be a traitor to his country."

"What are you going to do with this young British officer?"

"Why, I will send him to Arnold."

"Send him to Arnold?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but don't you think it would be better to send him to General Washington, at his headquarters?"

"No; I will send him to Arnold, but the documents, here, I shall send by special messenger to the commander-in-chief."

"I approve of your sending the documents to General Washington," said the officer; "and I think it would be better to send Major Andre there also."

The colonel was decided in his view, however, and insisted that Andre should be sent to West Point.

He wrote a letter to Arnold, explaining about the capture of Major Andre, and how the documents which had been found on the British officer's person were to be sent to the commander-in-chief.

Then, next morning, a party set out for West Point, with the prisoner in their midst. One of their number had the letter to Arnold in his pocket.

This party had been gone half an hour when Benjamin Tallmadge, a major, and the second in command at North Castle, arrived. He had been away on business of some kind, and when Colonel Jameson told him about the cap-

ture of Andre, with the documents in his possession, the major became somewhat excited.

"And you say you have sent Andre to West Point, to be delivered into the hands of General Arnold?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Let me see the documents," cried Tallmadge.

The colonel produced them, and the major hastily scanned the papers.

"Colonel Jameson," he said, excitedly, "I believe these are genuine documents; I am not familiar with General Arnold's handwriting, but I am of the opinion that he wrote these. There could be no one among the British who would have the perfect knowledge of the forces at West Point and in the vicinity that is shown here. It must have been the work of some one in the patriot army and fort, and I don't see why Arnold is not as likely to be the man as any one else."

"I hardly think so," the colonel insisted.

"I beg of you not to send Andre to West Point," said Major Tallmadge, earnestly; "send after the party, and have it bring him back."

The colonel did not wish to do so.

The major was so earnest and insistent, however, that the other presently gave in.

"It can do no harm to do as you wish," he said; "so I will do it. I will send a messenger after the party and recall it; but I insist that it will be an injustice to the general, if not informed of this matter. He must be innocent."

The major tried to persuade the colonel to hold the letter back.

"If he is innocent it will be proven later," he said; "it doesn't hurt an innocent man to be suspected, and if he is guilty he ought to be punished."

But Jameson was firm.

"I have the utmost faith in General Arnold," he said; "and while I am willing that the prisoner shall be brought back and sent to the commander-in-chief, I must insist that the letter be permitted to reach its destination."

"Very well, since you insist," said the major; "and now I will myself go after the party and bring it back."

Five minutes later Major Tallmadge was riding westward at the top of his horse's speed.

An hour and a half later he overtook the party and halted it.

When he informed the leader of the party that the prisoner was to be taken back to North Castle Major Andre's face fell.

He had been feeling pretty cheerful, for he believed that Arnold would set him free, and that he would soon be on his way back to New York; and now to have this hope taken away from him made him feel very much cast down.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked; "and why is it that these men are not to be permitted to take me to West Point as the commander at North Castle ordered them to do?"

"I am Major Tallmadge, second in command at North Castle," was the reply. "I was away when you were there;

but I talked the matter over with Colonel Jameson, and we agreed that it would be wisest and best to recall the party and send you to General Washington's headquarters, instead of to West Point."

Of course Major Andre could say no more—or rather, it would have been useless for him to do so, and the party turned and headed back toward North Castle.

The man who had the letter to Arnold was told to continue onward and deliver the letter into Arnold's hands.

"That will save him, doubtless," thought Andre.

When they arrived at North Castle Andre was again placed in the guardhouse, and then Major Tallmadge went to headquarters and had a long talk with Colonel Jameson.

The question under discussion was regarding the disposition of Major Andre, pending the return of General Washington, who was at that time in Hartford, where he had gone to confer with Rochambeau. It was not known just when he would return, but the supposition was that he would be back at his headquarters about the 28th.

"I think it will be as well to keep the prisoner here until that date," said Tallmadge.

"I think so, too," agreed Jameson.

And this was done.

CHAPTER IX.

AGAIN A PRISONER.

After parting from the three patriots with their prisoner, Major Andre, Dick Slater rode to Tarrytown and then headed westward toward King's Ferry.

He was riding along at a gallop, thinking of the important capture that had been made, when suddenly he found himself confronted by a dozen rough looking men with leveled rifles and muskets in their hands.

"Stop!" yelled one; "hol' on, er we'll riddle ye with bullets."

Dick brought his horse to a stop as quickly as possible.

"Who are you and what do you want?" he asked.

"Who air ye, an' whar air ye goin'?" was the retort.

"I am a traveler, and I am on my way to King's Ferry."

"Oh, ye air."

"Yes."

"Then whar are ye goin'?"

"To the home of a friend."

"Whut is ther name of your frien'?"

"Joshua Smith."

"Humph! You're no friend of Josh Smith."

"Why not?"

"Becos ye air er rebel, an' he's er king's man."

"I am not a rebel."

"Yas ye air, an' we know it by yer uniform. But thet don' matter. Whut we want is ther money ye hev in yer pockets an' ther hoss."

"I have no money."

"Ye hain't?"

"I haven't a cent. And this horse is not mine; he belongs to Mr. Smith."

"Whut air ye doin' with 'im, then?"

"I borrowed him."

"Humph. Waal, we're goin' ter borry 'im frum you. Git down."

Dick did not like the idea of being forced to give up the horse. It was far too great a distance to West Point for him to attempt to walk it; and then he was hungry.

He made up his mind that he would not let the men have the horse.

Instead of getting down as ordered he suddenly urged the horse forward at a gallop and dropped forward upon the animal's neck.

The action took the men by surprise; they were not expecting anything of the kind.

The horse was upon and right among them before they realized what was being done, and then they fired several shots. They did not have time to take aim, however, and it would have been only by an accident had they hit him.

The bullets flew wild, and Dick was not injured.

One of the bullets wounded the horse slightly, however, and this served as a spur to the animal, and he dashed up the road at the best speed of which he was capable.

Dick let the animal go at his own gait for quite awhile, and then brought him back down to an ordinary gallop.

He arrived at King's Ferry, crossed the river and continued on in the direction of the Smith home.

He arrived there at last, and was just debating with himself whether he should stop and ask Smith to let him ride, when suddenly he found himself surrounded by a dozen men, one of whom was Smith himself.

They seized hold of the Liberty Boy and pulled him off the horse before he could make a move to offer resistance, had he intended to do so.

In a trice they had the youth's arms bound and he was a prisoner.

"We got you, you horse-thief!" cried Smith; "what have you to say for yourself?"

"I didn't steal the horse," said Dick.

"Bah, you needn't say that. Next thing, you'll be saying that I gave him to you."

"No; I borrowed the horse."

"Of me, I suppose?" sneeringly.

"No, of a boy that was here."

"That will do to tell; what right would my chore boy have to lend you one of my horses?"

"Well, he had no right to do so, I suppose; but I asked him if he thought you would care, and he said he did not think you would."

"He denies having told you that you might take the horse; he says that you went and got the horse without a word."

"That is not true, Mr. Smith."

"You know my name, then?"

"Oh, yes; I've heard of you; and then the boy said your name was Smith."

"Humph. I think that I've heard of you, too, young man."

"I guess not, sir."

"Yes, I have; you are Dick Slater, the captain of a company of rebels known as 'The Liberty Boys of Seventy-Six.'"

"You are mistaken, sir." Dick thought it best to deny his identity, for he knew that he was in the hands of Tories.

His denial did no good, however; one of the men spoke up and said:

"I know ye air Dick Slater; I hev seen ye three er four times, an' wuz told thet ye wuz ther captain uv ther Liberty Boys."

Dick realized that it would do no good to deny his identity any further, and so he said:

"Well, supposing I am Dick Slater; what are you going to do with me?"

"That is to be decided later," said Smith; "for the present, we will take you into the house and hold you a prisoner."

So Dick was conducted into the house, and to an upper room, where he was locked in.

Left alone, he reflected upon his position.

"This is bad," he said to himself; "here I was in a great hurry to reach West Point; indeed it is important that I reach there soon, and now I am a prisoner and may be held here all the rest of the day, and perhaps all night as well."

He looked around him, and noted that it would be an easy matter to escape by way of the window, providing he could get his arms free.

That would be the difficulty, however; his captors had done their work well; his arms were tightly bound, and he did not believe that he could get them free.

Still, he could try.

That was one peculiarity of Dick Slater; he never gave up. No matter how hopeless a task seemed to be, he would go at it with as much determination as though he was sure in advance that it could be accomplished.

So now he worked away at the ropes which bound his arms.

He pulled, tugged and strained.

He worked till he heard steps approaching, away long toward supper time.

Then he ceased his efforts and seated himself on a chair at one side of the room.

Presently he heard the key turn in the lock, and the door opened.

Joshua Smith entered, carrying a plate on which was plenty of good food.

"Here is your supper," said Smith; "now I am going to free your hands, but I shall stand here by the door, pistol in hand, and if you try to escape, I will shoot you dead!"

Dick eyed the speaker closely and searchingly. He decided that the man meant what he said.

"I will not try to escape," the youth said.

Smith then untied the rope binding Dick's wrists and the youth ate his dinner. When he had finished, Smith said:

"Turn your back to me, and place your wrists together."

Dick did as told. He was on the alert, however; he had made up his mind that he would make an attempt to escape.

Smith picked up the rope with one hand and held to the pistol with the other; just as he was on the point of winding the rope around the youth's wrists, Dick suddenly ducked, whirled and seized hold of the Tory.

He took Smith completely by surprise.

The pistol dropped from the man's hand, and then the struggle began on practically even terms.

Dick was striving to get hold of the man's throat, in order to keep him from calling for help, but could not do so quickly enough.

Smith, realizing that he was going to have a hard struggle, with the possibility that he would be overpowered in the end, suddenly gave utterance to a yell.

"Help! Help!" he cried.

Almost immediately Dick heard the clatter of footsteps on the stairs and along the hall; he knew by the sound that there were several persons coming.

He made a desperate effort to break loose from Smith, with the intention of making an effort to get away before the other men appeared on the scene, but could not do so. They entered the room and seized hold of Dick, and soon had his arms bound again.

"Well, you didn't make a success of it, did you?" remarked Smith.

"No, I failed, but I would not have done so had you not got help."

"Perhaps not."

Then Smith and his companions left the room, locking the door behind them.

Dick was left to himself, and his reflections were anything but pleasant.

He had hoped to escape, and had failed.

He was determined not to give up, however.

He would keep on trying to make his escape.

He worked away at his bonds, but found that they were so tight he could not get them loose.

When he had put in two or three hours at this he gave it up and lay down on the cot in one corner and was soon sound asleep.

When morning came Smith and one of his companions came up and brought him his breakfast. With both there it was useless for him to try to make an attempt to get away, so he did not try to do so.

Dick remained there a prisoner till noon of Sunday the twenty-fifth. About one o'clock he heard the key turn in the lock and then the door opened and the boy whom Dick had seen milking the cows in the barnyard the morning he got the horse, entered.

"Hullo," he said; "they've got ye tied up, hain't they?"

"So they have, my boy; I wish you would set me free."

"Thet's whut I've cum ter do."

Dick's face lighted up.

"I'm glad of that," he said; "untie my hands quick."

"All right."

The boy proceeded to untie the knot, and while he was doing so, Dick said:

"Where is Mr. Smith and the other men?"

"I don't know whur they air. They went away erwhile ergo fur ther furst time sence ye cum here, an' I cum right up."

"Why did you want to set me free?" asked Dick.

"Wel, ye see, I kinder like ye, an' then I don't like Josh Smith very well. He don't treat me ez good ez he might."

"Oh, he ill treats you, does he?"

"Wall, yes; he kicks me around sometimes an' I don't like thet."

"I shouldn't think you would."

"Theer ye air," the boy said, as he unwound the rope and dropped it on the floor; "now ye kin go."

"Are you sure there are none of the men on the place?"

"Yes; they air all gone."

"Then I won't have any difficulty in getting away."

"No, theer's only ther wimmen folks, an' they kain't keep ye frum goin'."

The two went out of the room, along the hall and down the stairs. The boy accompanied Dick right through the sitting-room, and the women of the household saw him, and realized that he must have set the prisoner free.

"You'll catch it, Jim!" said one of the women, shaking her finger at the boy.

"Yes," from another; "brother Josh will give it to you."

"He'll hev ter ketch me furst," grinned the boy.

"He'll catch you!"

When they were outside, Dick said:

"You have done a bad thing for yourself, Jim; you won't dare stay here any longer."

"I don' wanter stay; I've made up my min' ter go erway, an' thet's the reason I kim downstairs with ye."

"Where will you go?"

"I dunno; I think I kin fin' work at ther home uv somebuddy aroun' heer."

"Go to the home of a patriot, Jim."

"I wull, ye bet. I don' like these heer Tories."

They went out to the road and started up it, in the direction of West Point, and they had gone only a short distance when they saw Josh Smith and three more men come around a bend one hundred yards distant.

Smith saw and recognized them.

"Stop!" he yelled; "don't you try to steal away!"

But Dick and the boy paid no attention to him. They leaped the fence and darted into the timber. They were determined to make their escape.

After them, yelling wildly, came the four Tories.

CHAPTER X.

DICK AT WEST POINT.

Dick feared that the boy would not be able to run fast enough to enable him to get away from the Tories; he was agreeably surprised, however, for he found that the boy could run almost as fast as he could.

They dashed through the timber at the top of their speed.

After them came the Tories. These men were awkward and clumsy, however, and could not run very fast; they were soon distanced.

They soon realized that it was useless for them to try to catch up with the fugitives and so they gave up the pursuit and went back to the road and then to the house.

Mrs. Smith started to tell her husband about the escape of the prisoner, and that the boy had helped him to escape, but her husband interrupted her.

"I saw them," he growled; "they have got away."

Meanwhile Dick and Jim were making their way through the timber.

An hour later they came to a farmhouse and Jim asked the man if he wanted a boy to work for him. The man said he needed a boy, and that he would give him work.

The man was a patriot, and so Jim was glad to stay there.

He bade Dick good by, and after Dick had thanked him for setting him free, the Liberty Boy went on in the direction of West Point.

An hour and a half later he arrived there, to find the fort in an uproar.

All was excitement.

Benedict Arnold had turned traitor and fled to the British.

Dick went at once to the quarters occupied by his Liberty Boys.

There were one hundred of the youths, bright, handsome fellows, bronzed, alert, full of life and energy.

When they saw Dick they gave him a joyous greeting.

He had been away several days, and they had begun to feel fears for his safety.

"Arnold is a traitor, Dick!" cried Bob Estabrook, a handsome youth of about Dick's age; "but I suppose you knew that?"

"Yes, several days ago."

This was said quietly, but it made Bob and his comrades gasp and looked amazed.

"You knew it several days ago."

"You don't mean it!"

"Why didn't you come and see to it that Arnold was captured?"

"Where have you been?"

Such were a few of the questions asked.

"I'll tell you everything later on," was the reply; "when did Arnold flee?"

"This morning."

"He made his escape, then?"

"Yes; he went down the river in his barge, and was taken on board a British ship, and by this time is in New York, likely."

"Was no effort made to catch him?"

"It would have been useless; the men came back in the barge and reported that Arnold had gone aboard the British ship, and so that settled it."

"Jove, I wish I had got here sooner!"

"Yes, so do I. What delayed you?"

"I was captured by some Tories and held prisoner, Bob."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"When did you succeed in making your escape?"

"This afternoon."

"Do you know any of the Tories?"

"Yes, I know one. His name is Joshua Smith; I was a prisoner in his house."

"All right; we will attend to the case of Mr. Smith one of these days."

"So we will; but for the present I am more interested in this affair of General Arnold. Is the commander-in-chief here?"

"Yes; that is to say, he is at his headquarters over the river."

"Has he been over here?"

"Yes, and he found that Arnold had arranged things so that the British might easily capture the stronghold."

"Jove, I would not have thought that Arnold would have been such a scoundrel," said Mark Morrison.

"Nor would I," said Dick; "but we are confronted by the facts in the case."

Then the youths insisted that Dick tell the story of his adventures while away.

He did so, and when they learned that he had been on board the British sloop-of-war, with Major Andre, the British spy and messenger, and that he had been captured and held a prisoner in the hold, had made his escape and later on had practically assisted in trapping the British messenger, their astonishment was great.

They uttered exclamation after exclamation, and when he had finished, Bob said:

"Jove, I wish that I had been with you, Dick!"

"You couldn't have helped me, Bob. We would have both been made prisoners, instead of only one."

"That may be, but," with a grin, "I would have had the fun of going through the adventures."

Dick laughed.

"So that is what you are thinking of. I might have known it."

"Thot's roight," grinned Patsy Brannigan; "Bhob is jhust loike mesilf; he is alwuz wantin' to foight."

"You don'd vos want to fighd so much as vat you dalk abouid, Batsy Prannigan," said Carl Gookenspieler. "You would radder dalk as fighd."

"Ob, g'wan wid yez," said Patsy; "I loike to foight bet-

ther dhan phwat yez do, an' thot's dhe thruth Oi'm 'tillin' av yez."

"I don'd vos t'ink dot."

"When you two fellows get through quarreling, Dick will go on talking," said Ben Spurlock.

"All roight, Bob, my bye," grinned Patsy; "we are afther bein' done roight now."

"Yah, ve half quitted dose quarrellings, und dot is so."

Then Dick told how he had been captured by Joshua Smith and his companions, and the youths said they would be glad to help Dick get even with the Tory.

"We will attend to him one of these days," said Dick: "but just now we want to see if there is anything we can do to aid in getting hold of Arnold, the traitor."

"I wish we could recapture him, Dick," said Bob.

"I wish so, too."

"Perhaps we may be able to do so."

"I am willing to make the attempt; though there could not be much hopes of our succeeding, now that Arnold is probably in New York."

An hour later Dick went over to headquarters, and after waiting a while, was given an interview by General Washington.

When the commander-in-chief learned that Dick had really helped trap the British messenger, Andre, he was well pleased and complimented the youth.

"Dick, you did well," he said; "had Major Andre succeeded in getting back to New York with the documents in his possession, it would have been bad for us. West Point might have been captured."

"I am glad that I had a little something to do with the affair, your excellency."

They talked quite a while, and then Dick said:

"I wish to ask a favor, sir."

"What is it, Dick?"

"I wish to get your permission to go to New York and try to capture Arnold and bring him back."

General Washington shook his head slowly and thoughtfully.

"I would like for you to capture Arnold and bring him back," he said, "but I fear it will be impossible to do so. He is in the city, among the British, and it would be only by some unusual chance that you would be able to make a success of the undertaking."

"Well, we can make the attempt, at any rate, and if we should by any chance succeed, we will have done a good thing."

"That is true; and you have my permission to make the attempt. I certainly shall not be surprised if you fail."

"Very well, and thank you, sir."

Dick took his departure presently, and went back over to West Point.

"What did the commander-in-chief say?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"He gave his permission, Bob," was the reply.

"Hurrah! I am glad of that."

The other boys said the same.

"When are you going to make the attempt to capture Arnold, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I think we will go down to the city to-day, Bob; or rather, we will go down to-night."

"Yes, we want to be under cover of the darkness when it comes to going on such a dangerous journey, old man."

"So we do."

"How will we go—in a boat?"

"Yes."

"How many of us are going?"

"Oh, about six, Bob."

Then he named the six who were to go.

"Where will we get a boat?" asked Mark Morrison.

"There is one down at the river bank that we can get," replied Dick.

It was now almost supper time, and the youths went to work to get their suppers.

When they had finished this work, they ate their suppers and then the six went down to the river and got into the boat and started down the river.

They did not row hard; in fact they simply let the boat drift with the current. They would get there soon enough even at that rate.

Three hours later they were opposite the north end of the city of New York.

They headed in toward the shore, now.

It was their intention to land opposite the common.

Luckily it was a dark night, so their approach would not be noticed by any sentinels who might be posted along the water front.

They would have to be careful, however, or they would be heard.

Closer and closer to the shore they drew.

They were moving very slowly, and when the boat's prow struck the sand of the shore, it made scarcely any noise at all.

The youths sat still, however, and listened. They did not wish to risk getting out of the boat until after they had made sure their presence was not known.

Presently they made up their minds that they were safe, and so they disembarked.

They tied the painter and started across the common.

They had gone nearly across the common when they were challenged:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

They feared they were going to get into trouble even before entering the city.

There was a brief period of silence, and then the challenge came for the third time.

Still the youths were silent.

"I thought I heard footsteps," they heard a voice say; "but I must have been mistaken, after all."

The youths remained silent. They began to think that they might escape after all.

The sentinel did not speak again, but presently they heard his slow, measured footsteps as he moved away.

"That will leave a place for us to slip through," whispered Dick; "come along, boys."

They moved slowly and cautiously forward.

They managed to slip across the sentinel's beat without being discovered, and a little later they were on Broadway.

Dick told the youths that it would be best for them to separate.

"We will try to find out where Arnold has taken up his quarters," he said; "and when we have learned that, we will see if there is any possible chance that we may capture him and take him out of the city."

"Where shall we meet, and when?" asked Bob.

"Meet me in front of Trinity Church in two hours from now," was the reply.

"All right."

Then the youths separated, and went in as many different directions as there were youths.

Dick went down Broadway, and then turned aside and went to Fraunce's tavern.

He had heard that this was British headquarters.

He thought it might be that Arnold had taken up his quarters there.

He paused just across the street from the tavern.

He noted that British officers and soldiers were going and coming to and from the building almost constantly.

"It may be possible that Arnold is in there now," Dick told himself.

Presently a man came along and paused near Dick and looked across at the tavern.

"What place is that?" Dick asked, pretending ignorance.

"That is Fraunce's Tavern."

"Oh, I know; but why are all the soldiers going and coming?"

"It is British headquarters."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes, and I understand that General Arnold, who was in command of the patriot stronghold at West Point, and who turned traitor and was forced to flee for his life, is in there tonight."

"Ah, yes. I heard about that."

"I am a loyal man, myself," the man went on; "but I don't approve of the action of this patriot officer. It was the act of a sneak, and I for one would never have any use for him."

"I judge that that is the way most everyone would look at the matter, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

IN NEW YORK..

The youths stopped instantly.

They made no reply, however.

Again the challenge came.

The youths remained silent and motionless.

"Yes; he has dragged a thousand-fold better man than he to his death. I mean Major Andre, who went up there to confer with Arnold and was captured."

"I heard about that, too," said Dick.

"I supposed you had; the matter is in every one's mouth."

"Yes. By the way, I wonder if this man Arnold is staying at the tavern over there?"

"I don't think he is. It is my understanding that he has rooms two or three blocks away, up the street."

They exchanged a few more words, and then the man walked on up the street.

"I'll stay here until Arnold comes out, and then I will follow him and see where he has his quarters," thought Dick.

He waited nearly an hour, and then Benedict Arnold, accompanied by half a dozen soldiers, came forth from the tavern and walked up the street.

Dick moved slowly along, on the other side, and when he saw Arnold enter a building, three blocks distant, he made a careful note of it so he would be able to find it again.

Then he hastened to Trinity Church, to meet the boys.

Two were already there, and the others soon put in appearance.

"Well, what luck?" Dick asked.

The youths said they had not had any luck. They had not been able to learn where Arnold was staying.

"How did you make out?" asked Bob.

"I found where he is staying."

"You did."

"Yes."

"Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?"

Dick laughed.

"I wanted to see whether either of you had had as good luck as I had," was the reply.

"Well, where is the traitor staying?"

Dick told them.

"Let's go over there and see what we can do," said Bob, eagerly.

"Very well," replied Dick, "we had better go in pairs, however, as we will be less likely to attract attention."

So they set out, Bob and Dick in the lead, and the others back a little distance, so as to be able to keep them in sight, and yet not look as though following them.

Presently they were on the street on which stood the building in which Arnold had his quarters.

Dick pointed the building out, and then said:

"Yonder is an alley; we will go down it, and get around to the back of the building. If we can enter the house at all, it must be at the rear."

They made their way to the alley and down it, and when they reached the yard at the rear of the building, they climbed the fence and stole over to the rear door.

They tried it.

It was fastened.

They then tried a window.

It was fastened also, but it gave slightly, and the youths were sure they could force it up.

They were right. Their combined strength was equal to the task. They succeeded in forcing the window up, and then they stood there, listening. They were afraid they might have aroused some one.

They heard no sound.

After waiting a few minutes, Dick said:

"I will go in and see if I can get Arnold's room located. You boys stay here."

"Better let me go with you, Dick," said Bob. Of course, both spoke in cautious whispers.

"No, it will be best for me to go alone, this time. Then, when I have learned the way, and if there is any chance to capture Arnold, we will all go."

"All right. If you get into a difficulty, give a yell, and we will be right with you, old fellow."

"Very well; but I will try and not get into any trouble."

Dick climbed through the open window.

Then he felt his way across what was probably the kitchen.

He came to a door, and this he softly opened.

He guessed that he was in the hall.

He was not long in finding the stairs.

He made his way up these, softly.

When he reached the second floor, he made his way along, pausing at each door and listening, in the hope that he would hear Arnold talking to some one, and that he would thus be able to locate the traitor. He failed, however, and went to the floor above.

He made his way along till he came to the front of the house, and then he found a door under which shone a light.

His heart leaped.

Perhaps he was to be successful, after all.

He tiptoed to the door, and placed his ear to the keyhole.

He could hear voices, and he believed that one was that of Arnold, the traitor.

He soon learned that this was indeed the case, and he was engaged in conversation with another man, probably a British officer.

Dick listened till he heard the officer say that he must be going, and then he opened a door just behind him, that he had previously ascertained to be unfastened, and stepped into what he supposed to be an untenanted room, there to wait till the officer was gone.

In closing the door he made a slight noise, and instantly, from within the room, sounded a startled voice:

"Who is there?"

CHAPTER XII.

LIVELY TIMES.

Dick stood there, motionless, silent.

He scarcely breathed.

He hoped the man—Dick knew he was a man by the

voice—would think he had been mistaken in thinking some one was in the room and would go to sleep again.

His hopes were not realized, however; suddenly the demand was heard again, louder, more imperative this time; "Who is there?"

He heard an ominous clicking sound, which indicated that a pistol had been cocked.

The Liberty Boy realized that he was in danger of getting a bullet in the body, and so he quickly, but softly dropped upon his hands and knees, and began crawling stealthily toward the bed.

He was careful, but must have made sufficient noise to attract the attention of the inmate of the room, for there was a sudden flash, the roar of a pistol, and the thud of a bullet.

Immediately following the sound was heard a wild yell of pain from outside the door.

Dick guessed what had happened. The officer who was taking leave of Arnold had got in the way of the bullet, which had easily gone through the thin panel of the door and found a lodging place in the redcoat's body.

Dick made a quick dive forward and managed to get under the bed. He had suspected that a bed was there, had acted on this theory, and the result was that he succeeded in getting out of the way just in time, for the man who had fired the pistol leaped out of bed just as Dick disappeared underneath it.

At the same moment the door was thrown open and a slightly wounded and greatly excited British officer bounded into the room, crying, fiercely:

"Murderer! Assassin! Shoot a man down when he is not looking, will you? Let me at you, you cowardly scoundrel, and I will wring your neck!"

A light from Arnold's room made it just light enough in this room so that the two men could make out each other's form, and they leaped at each other like panthers.

They caught hold of each other and struggled fiercely.

Arnold came running to the scene, to learn what the trouble was, and soon other footsteps were heard, and a number of men came running to the scene.

"Here! what is the trouble?" cried one. "Who did the shooting, and why?"

The two combatants were too busy to answer, and so Arnold told all he knew.

He said that the officer had been in his room talking, and had taken his departure, only to be struck by a bullet just as he came even with the door.

The man who had fired the pistol was in his night clothes, but it was probable that he was a British officer.

"Let's part them," said one of the men. "There must be some misunderstanding here."

Several sprang forward, and after some hard work got the two pulled apart.

"Now, what does this mean?" asked one.

"That's what I want him to explain," said the wounded officer. "I want to know why he shot me?"

"It was an accident," said the other; "that is to say, I

did not shoot at you. I heard a noise and called out 'Who is there?' I did not receive any reply, but heard a noise a second time, and so I fired my pistol, with the result that I accidentally wounded you. I am sorry."

"So am I," with a serio-comic smile. "Well, I accept your apology, and will not hold any malice."

"Thank you."

Then they began figuring on what had caused the noise the man had heard.

"Likely you heard me, and thought it was something in your room," the wounded officer suggested.

"No; I am sure it was in this room; but you had better have your wound dressed. I will send for a surgeon."

"No need of that. It is not at all serious. I will wrap a handkerchief around the wound—it is in the fleshy part of my arm—and when I get to my room, I will have my room-mate dress it. He is an amateur surgeon, and will be able to do it nicely."

One of the men bound the handkerchief around the wound, and then the officer bade them all good-night and took his departure.

The man who had shot the officer had donned his clothing, and now he said:

"I would like to know what made that noise. I could have sworn that some one was in this room."

"You must have been mistaken," said Arnold.

"Why not take a look around the room?" from another.

As may well be supposed, Dick heard this suggestion with anything rather than a feeling of pleasure. If they looked under the bed, they would most certainly see him; he thought, and he was pretty sure they would look there.

"It will do no harm to look in the closet, and the adjoining room," said another of the men.

But before they could put their words into effect, there sounded the clatter of feet on the stairway and along the hall, and five youths, pistol in hand, came running toward the little group.

These were the five Liberty boys who had been left down stairs. They had heard the pistol shot, and had at once leaped to the conclusion that Dick had gotten into trouble.

"Come, boys," Bob had cried; "we will go up there and help Dick out, if we never get out alive!"

The youths were only too ready for such a move, and the next minute they were making their way in the direction the pistol shot had sounded from.

They found the staircases leading to the second and third floors and mounted them three steps at a time.

They saw the party of officers and others as soon as they reached the second floor, and then they dashed forward.

Then there was an interchange of pistol shots, and two of the officers fell, one dead, the other wounded.

Two of the Liberty Boys were wounded, but not seriously, and they kept on advancing and made a hand-to-hand attack on the men.

"Give it to them, boys," cried Bob; "knock them right and left!"

The boys obeyed, and for a few minutes there was the liveliest kind of a scrimmage there.

Dick heard and understood what had occurred, and he crawled hastily from under the bed and ran out and took a hand in the melee.

The youths were outnumbered, but they made a good fight. They realized that they would better get away while they had the opportunity.

Dick made an effort to get at Benedict Arnold, but was unable to do so before that worthy escaped into his room. Arnold recognized Dick, and feared that he might be captured.

The Liberty Boys suddenly broke away and fled along the hall and down the stairs.

Some of the officers and men followed, but they could not catch the fleet-footed youngsters, and the youths succeeded in getting to the kitchen and out through the open window.

They ran across the yard, climbed the fence and then paused and listened.

There were no sounds of pursuit.

The officers and others in the building had given up the chase.

The youths stood there several minutes, silent and watchful; then Bob said:

"What are we going to do now, Dick?"

"We are going to stay here half an hour and then go right back into the house, Bob."

"Do you mean it, Dick?"

Bob's voice was eager.

"Of course I mean it."

"Good for you! That is the way to do business."

"Well, I think it is all right in this case; the redcoats and other occupants of the building won't expect any such action on our part, and so it will be safer for us next time than it was this first time."

"I believe that."

"Yes, they naturally think that we have fled for good, and that we are probably getting away from here as fast as our legs can carry us."

"That is what they think."

The youths talked in whispers, and when half an hour or such matter had elapsed, Dick said:

"Let's try it again."

They entered the yard, crossed it to the window, and tried it.

It was fastened, but only temporarily and after a fashion, and it was easy for the youths to force the window open.

Then they entered.

They were now familiar with the way, and would have no difficulty in getting where they wished to go.

They moved across the room, out into the hall, up the two flights of stairs and then along the upper hall, toward the front of the building.

They knew which door led into the room occupied by Benedict Arnold, and they paused in front of it.

It was dark in the hall, and they had been forced, of course, to feel their way.

Now Dick cautiously tried the door.

To his surprise it was not locked.

The youth pushed the door slightly open and looked in.

There was a faint light in the room, such a light as would be made by a single candle.

Dick pushed the door still wider open, and stuck his head through the opening far enough so that he could see all the room.

Seated at a small desk at the farther side, with his back to the door, was Benedict Arnold.

He was reading a letter.

The letter was so interesting, seemingly, as to cause the reader to lose all thought of anything else.

Dick whispered to Bob:

"We will slip in and up behind him. I will grab him by the throat and prevent an outcry, while you seize him around the waist, pinioning his arms."

"All right," replied Bob.

They entered the room, slowly and cautiously.

They tiptoed, and did not make any noise at all.

Slowly across the room they moved.

Arnold remained motionless, unsuspecting.

The youths were almost within reaching distance of him, when Arnold folded the letter and heaved a sigh.

Fearing that their intended victim might turn and discover them, Dick sprang forward and seized Arnold by the throat.

Bob sprang forward, also, and threw his arms around Arnold's waist, pinioning his arms.

The traitor struggled and attempted to cry out, but all to no avail.

The grip on his throat was too strong; the fingers compressed his throat to such an extent as to make it an impossibility for him to utter a sound.

His struggles were fierce for a few minutes, and then, realizing that it was energy wasted, he stopped struggling.

The terrible grip on his throat was gradually reducing him to unconsciousness, anyway, and he would have been absolutely helpless in another minute.

The other youths had entered the room before this, and had closed and locked the door.

Now they gagged Arnold, and bound his arms.

This done, he was placed on the chair, where he sat, white and limp; it was all he could do to sit up.

He glared at the Liberty Boys, anger and the shadow of a terrible fear on his face and in his eyes.

The look he gave the youths was a question, and it said as plain as words could have said it: "What are you going to do with me?"

That was a question that was bothering the Liberty Boys.

They had the traitor, Arnold, a prisoner in their hands, but this was only the beginning; the real difficulty was to come—that of getting Arnold out of the house and city.

This would be an extremely difficult task.

Indeed most people would have said it was something that could not be done.

With the Liberty Boys, however, nothing seemed impossible.

No task seemed to be too difficult for them to attempt.

They believed they could get the traitor out of the house and city, and they were determined to do so, if such a thing was possible.

They discussed the matter at some length.

Finally it was decided that they would stay where they were until after midnight, as it would be dangerous to try to conduct the prisoner through the streets when people were still walking about.

They had just come to this decision when there came the sound of footsteps in the hall, followed by a knock on the door.

The youths looked at each other in dismay.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATTEMPT THAT FAILED..

Who could the newcomer be?

What did he want?

And what were the Liberty Boys to do?

Probably the man wanted to see Arnold, and of course this could not be.

The man must be kept out of the room.

But how could this be done?

There was only one way, so far as they could see, and that was by maintaining absolute silence. In this way they might make the man think no one was in the room, that possibly Arnold had gone out.

So they remained as silent as death.

Again the knock was heard.

Still the youths remained silent.

Arnold, who was now almost himself again, was looking eagerly in the direction of the door. It was evident that he would have given a great deal to have had the gag out of his mouth, so that he could have called out to the person outside the door.

There was a half-minute of silence, and then there came the knock again, louder than before.

The youths remained silent.

Suddenly a thought struck Arnold, however; his hands were bound, but his feet were not, and he lifted them up and dropped them heavily on the floor, making quite a racket. Indeed, in the stillness of the night, it sounded doubly loud.

"Hello, in there; why don't you open the door?"

Dick and the youths exchanged glances of consternation.

Bob glared at Arnold as though he would have liked to have knocked his head off.

It would have done no good, however.

Dick did not reply to the man at the door. He was

thinking rapidly, and doing his best to hit upon some plan for getting past the trouble that seemed to threaten.

Again the voice was heard:

"What's the trouble in there? I wish to talk to you, General Arnold."

Of course there was no reply.

Then the youths heard the man say, in a lower voice, as if speaking to himself:

"Jove, there must be something wrong in there. Perhaps General Arnold is ill. I will break the door down, but that I get in."

There followed a thump against the door, and it was evident that the man, whoever he was, had thrown all his weight against it.

The door creaked and quivered.

"Great Guns, Dick," said Bob in a whisper; "that fellow is going to spoil everything."

Dick nodded his head.

"I am afraid so, Bob."

Then he told a couple of the youths to stand over by the door, and in case it was broken open and the man came plunging in, to seize him and make a prisoner of him.

The youths took up their positions, as told.

They had just done so, when they heard voices and footsteps out in the hall.

"Dick, that fellow has aroused all the men on this floor!" whispered Bob.

"It would seem so, Bob."

There was a sober, serious look on Dick's face.

Arnold, the traitor, was looking pleased and immensely relieved.

It was evident that he thought that he was to be rescued.

He was well aware that it would be a very difficult matter for the Liberty Boys to get him out of the city, under the most favorable circumstances, and he did not believe that they could do so, now that the men on this floor had been aroused.

Dick realized that again they would have to give up trying to get the traitor out of the house, and would have to think of making their own escape.

He walked quickly to a window, and looked out.

Below, a distance of ten or twelve feet, was a balcony, and if the youths could reach this, they could get to the ground and then away.

Dick raised the window.

Outside in the hall could be heard excited voices.

"Come, boys," said Dick, cautiously; "we must get out of here, or we will be captured."

The youths joined him at the window, and Bob looked out.

"We can make it, Dick," he said. "I'll show you."

He climbed over the window-sill, and lowered himself till he hung extended downward.

Then he dropped.

He alighted on his feet and maintained an upright position.

"Come on," he called up, cautiously, "there isn't any danger of getting hurt."

One after the other the youths climbed out and dropped to the balcony, until only Dick remained.

Just as he was climbing over the window sill, there came a great thud against the door, and it creaked and groaned and very nearly gave way.

"Get on down to the street as quickly as possible," called down Dick.

The youths obeyed, and then Dick lowered himself, and dropped. Just as he did so, he heard the door come open with a crash.

He had not got out of the room a moment too soon.

There were half a dozen men in the hall, and they immediately rushed into the room.

When they caught sight of Benedict Arnold sitting there, trussed up like a turkey ready for market, they stopped and stared in amazement.

"What does this mean?" cried the leader, a British officer; "this beats anything I have ever seen!"

"Ungag him, and he will tell us," suggested another.

"Yes, yes, certainly."

"Hello, look there; the window is open!" cried another.

"Of course. Some one has been here, and they made their escape by way of the window."

One of the men removed the gag from Arnold's mouth, while a couple of the others ran to the window and looked out and downward.

Dick Slater had just dropped from the balcony to the sidewalk.

"There he goes; yes and there are others!" cried one of the men, excitedly.

"After them!" cried Arnold, "they are the Liberty Boys. One of them is Dick Slater, the famous scout and spy!"

"Come on!" cried one, excitedly; but the others shook their heads.

"We can't catch them, now," he said. "They will be four or five blocks from here before we can get down onto the street."

"Still some effort to capture them ought to be made," said another. "We can go down and spread the alarm, and then everybody can be on the lookout for the rebels."

"Yes, that can be done; go down, a couple of you, and attend to the matter."

Then the officer who had caused all the trouble by appearing at such an inopportune time, turned to Arnold, with the query:

"What were the rebels trying to do, General Arnold? Were they going to force you to sign some kind of a paper?"

"No," with a short laugh, "they were going to carry me away a prisoner."

"What! Why, that would have been an utter impossibility, General. Surely those Liberty Boys were not so foolish as to think they could do such an unheard-of thing?"

Arnold laughed shortly.

"You don't know Dick Slater and the Liberty Boys," he

said; "there isn't anything they won't attempt to do; there are no dangers too great to deter them from anything they have set their minds upon accomplishing."

"But that is such a wild scheme, such an unheard-of thing to attempt to do!"

"No matter; the Liberty Boys don't care anything about that. They were most certainly going to try to get me out of this building and away, and out of the city. I know Dick Slater so well, and know his abilities and characteristics so thoroughly that I would not like to say he would have failed, had you not come here just when you did and broke in upon their plans."

The officer and the other men present shook their heads, and looked incredulous. They could not think that such a thing could have been accomplished.

"It was their intention," went on Arnold, "to wait till past midnight, and then they counted on conducting me by way of side streets to the country, when they would have been able to get safely away with me."

The men shook their heads again.

"You do seem to have great respect for the prowess of the Liberty Boys," said the officer.

"Yes, I know them; you see I have campaigned with them. I have been with them on many a field of battle, and I know that they do not know the meaning of the word fear."

They talked a while longer, and the men withdrew, after saying good night; that is, all went save the officer who had come to see Arnold. He remained to talk over some matters that had been discussed at headquarters, but which had not been settled.

Meanwhile what of Dick and the Liberty Boys?

They had lost no time in getting away from the vicinity, for they feared that they would be pursued.

They were seen running, and some British soldiers set up a cry and gave chase.

The soldiers had been drinking, and felt in just the mood for excitement of some kind.

They made so much noise that they quickly attracted the attention of a great number of people and a crowd was soon on the track of the youths.

The Liberty Boys were swift runners, however, and they did not much fear being overtaken. If they were not headed off, they would be able to make their escape, they felt certain.

They selected the darkest and most unfrequented streets, and in this manner made it difficult for the crowd to keep track of them.

They gradually drew away from their pursuers.

At last they were so far ahead that they realized that they were safe, and they drew long breaths of relief.

"I guess we are all right now, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, I think so."

"Jove, we have had a lively time of it."

"So we have."

"But it is too bad that we failed to bring Arnold away with us," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, I am sorry that our plans were spoiled," said Dick; "I am inclined to think that we might have succeeded in getting Arnold out of the city and back to the patriotic headquarters, where he would have met with the fate he so richly deserves."

"We would have made a strong effort to succeed, at any rate," said Bob.

They continued onward till they reached the common, and then they crossed it and were soon at the river.

Here a surprise awaited them, and an unpleasant one at that.

The boat was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOWNING THE COWBOYS.

"It's gone!"

"Yes, but where has it gone?"

"Somebody must have taken it."

"Yes, it was tied, and could not have drifted away."

Such were a few of the exclamations of the Liberty Boys when they discovered that the boat was missing.

"What are we to do?" asked Bob.

"We will have to walk, I guess," said Dick.

"Jove, that isn't a very pleasant prospect; it's a long ways to West Point."

"Well, we won't walk all the way; we can get horses at your father's home, Bob."

"That's so, but that's a long walk."

"True, but we mustn't mind a little thing like that."

"Then we are to give up the attempt to capture Arnold?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Yes, it would be useless to make another attempt, after what has taken place; they will be on their guard in the building where Arnold has his quarters, and it would be impossible for us to enter there again."

"That's so; it is too bad that we failed, after we had made a prisoner of Arnold; too!"

There was no use of discussing this any further, however, and so they turned and made their way northward.

They soon struck into the Bloomingdale road, and walked steadily onward.

Hour after hour they walked, and at last they reached the Harlem River and crossed it on the bridge.

Then they walked along the winding road which led through the timber.

They kept on going, pluckily, till daylight, and then they stopped at a farmhouse. The farmer and his family were up, and the woman was getting breakfast. They gave the youths a cheery welcome, and willingly gave them seats at the table, when the meal had been served.

"I'm kinder glad ye air here, young fellers," said the farmer, as they were eating; "some cowboys sent me word, las' night, thet they wuz goin' ter come heer this mornin' an' make me take ther oath uv alleegiance ter ther king, er else they'd hang me. Mebby ye'll stan' by me, ef so be's they do so."

"We certainly will," said Dick. They had already told the man that they were patriots, having first learned that he was one.

"Yes; we'll make it hot for the cowboys if they come while we are here," said Bob; "and I will add that I hope they will do so."

"I wish they wouldn't be so mean," said the woman of the household; "I don't see w'y they kain't let peeples er-lone. We hain't never bothered them, an' I don't see w'y they sh'd bother us."

"They don't keer nothin' erbout ther rights uv ther thing," said the farmer; "they air mean on gen'ral princerpals."

The man's name was Job Tuscon, and he had a daughter, Mary. She was a bright, pretty girl, who did not have much to say, but who listened to all that was said.

Sam Johnson, one of the six Liberty Boys, took a great liking to Mary Tuscon, and Dick and the other boys noticed this, and exchanged sly winks.

They had just finished breakfast, when Mary, who had gone to the door, uttered an exclamation.

"The cowboys are coming," she cried.

Mr. Tuscon and the Liberty Boys ran to the door and looked out.

"There are only ten of them," said Bob, in a voice of disappointment.

The other youths laughed.

"Listen to him," said Mark; "'only' ten, you say, Bob? How many did you want to see?"

"Oh, twenty or thirty—enough to make it interesting, at any rate."

"Oh, I guess that ten of them will be enough for that, Bob," said Dick.

"Bah! Any three of us can whip the whole gang."

"I don't know about that."

"Says," said Bob; "let's give them a surprise."

"What do you mean?" from Dick.

"Why, let's hide and not let them know we are here, Dick. They will come in as bold as brass and threaten Mr. Tuscon, like the cowards they are, and after they have had their say, we will step out and tell them what is what."

The other youths fell in with the idea at once.

"We will do that," said Dick; "let's go into the other room, yonder."

This was a bedroom, and the six went in there and partially closed the door.

The cowboys were soon at the door, and they called out to Mr. Tuscon to come out and show himself.

"We've got sum bizness ter transact with ye, Job," called out the leader.

The farmer went to the door. Contrary to the expectations of the cowboys, Mr. Tuscon did not seem to be greatly alarmed. He faced them unflinchingly and said:

"What is yer bizness with me?"

"Ye know, Job Tuscon."

"I don' know thet I do."

"Yas ye do; we sent ye word last night thet we wuz com-in' ter git ye ter take ther oath uv allegiance ter ther king."

"I remember now thet ye did; I hed a'mos' furgot et, becos I didn't think much about et."

The cowboys stared. They did not know what to think of the patriot; he was so cool and unconcerned.

The Liberty Boys understood and smiled; Bob very nearly laughed aloud.

"Say, he's giving it to them in good style, eh, boys?" whispered Bob.

The others nodded.

"Say, whut's the matter with ye?" asked the leader of the cowboys.

"Nothin', w'y?"

"Why ye're so all-fired cool an' ca'm-like; I don' understand et. Er perhaps ye've made up yer min' ter take ther oath uv alleegiance."

Tuscon shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said, "I hain't made up my min' ter do ennythin' uv ther kin'."

"Wal, d'ye know whut thet means?"

"No, whut does et mean?"

"Et means thet ye're goin' ter git inter trubble."

"Is thet so?"

"Ye bet et is!"

"Whut kin' of trubble? Whut air ye goin' ter do ter me?"

"We're goin' ter tie ye up ter er tree an' whup ye till yer back is raw, er till ye air red dy ter take ther oath."

"Oh, thet's whut ye air goin' ter do, hey?" Still the patriot did not seem to be much alarmed, and the cowboys did not know what to think.

"Ye bet et is," angrily; "an' now, fur ther las' time, wull ye take ther oath?"

"Uv course I won'."

"All right; we'll see erbout et. Grab 'im, boys, an' drag 'im out ter ther tree, an' tie 'im to et. We'll show 'im whether he'll take ther oath or not!"

Dick was listening to the conversation, and he knew that now was the time for the Liberty Boys to appear on the scene. He gave the boys the signal, and they left the bedroom, went swiftly across the floor, and appeared at the doorway, pistols in hand.

"Who are those saucy scoundrels, Mr. Tuscon?" asked Dick.

"W'y, they're erbout ez ornery er set uv fellers ez ye'll fin' in er long hunt, an' thet's er fack."

"Well, they don't need to go to getting saucy around here; we won't permit it. Say, you black-muzzled chap," addressing the leader, "what do you mean by coming here and threatening an honest man in the way you have just been doing?"

The cowboys had been standing there, staring at the youths in open-mouthed amazement. They were almost

paralyzed, for they had not been expecting anything of the kind.

"W-who air y-ye?" stammered the leader; "an' what right ye got ter be torkin' ter me in enny sech fashion ez thet, ennyhow?"

"The right that comes to one honest man to protect another, when such a rascal as you comes around, uttering threats."

"Say, Bill," said one of the cowboys, "thar's on'y six uv 'em; let's go fur 'em, an' thrash 'em."

The leader looked as though he would have liked to have acted upon this suggestion, but the six youths had their pistols out and leveled, and it would not do to make any move just at that time. Instead, he said:

"Come on erway, boys. We'll hev ter let this heer business go, I guess."

Then he turned and strode away, followed by the others.

They went only a little way, and then they turned and came running back, pistols in hands. They thought that they would be able to get the better of the little party in the cabin now that they were on equal terms so far as weapons was concerned.

They fired several pistol shots as they came, and the bullets whistled through the doorway, or were imbedded in the logs at the side of the door.

Luckily Mrs. Tuscon was in the kitchen, out of range.

Then Mr. Tuscon and the youths stepped to the doorway and fired several shots; they succeeded in wounding three of the cowboys, and this so discouraged them that they whirled and ran as fast as they could.

"After them!" cried Dick; "give it to the scoundrels. Teach them to let honest men alone!"

With yells of delight, the Liberty Boys bounded after the fleeing cowboys.

They fired pistol shot after pistol shot, and wounded three or four more of the cowboys.

The latter ran like frightened deer, however, and soon disappeared from sight in the timber.

Then the Liberty Boys returned to the house, laughing. They were well pleased with the manner in which they had made the cowboys take refuge in flight.

"I'll wager that they won't come back here again," grinned Bob.

"I hope they won't," said Mrs. Tuscon.

"If they do come and bother you, Mr. Tuscon, let us know, and we will hunt them down and kill a few of them," said Dick.

"All right, Mr. Slater; I'll do et."

Then the Liberty Boys happened to think that they might borrow horses from him, and Dick asked him if he had six horses to spare for a day or two.

Mr. Tuscon said he had that many horses to spare, and half an hour later the youths were riding northward at a gallop.

They arrived at the patriot headquarters just about noon, and Dick went at once to report to the commander-in-chief.

"Well, what luck, Dick?" asked General Washington.

Dick told him.

The commander-in-chief listened in wondering amazement.

"Dick, you did a wonderful, a most daring thing in going into the building the way you did," he said; "the wonder is that you managed to do such a thing and then get away."

"Well, it was rather a big risk, that's a fact; but we are here, safe and sound. I shall always feel sorry, however, that we were interrupted, for I believe that we would have got here and brought the traitor with us."

General Washington shook his head.

"I don't think you could have done it," he said; "the chances are that you would have been captured, and the attempt at bringing Arnold would have been a failure just the same."

"Possibly, sir."

When Dick had made his report, he took his leave and went back to the quarters that had been assigned to the Liberty Boys, and dispatched a boy back with the borrowed horses.

Benedict Arnold, as everybody knows, was never captured,

and at the close of the war went to England, where he lived till the day of his death.

Andre, the British spy and messenger, was executed.

Soon after the close of the war Sam Johnson and Mary Tuscon were married.

Dick Slater was always proud of the part he took in trapping the British messenger.

THE END.

The next number (184) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS IN DISTRICT 96; or, SURROUNDED BY REDCOATS," by Harry Moore.

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